YALE ONE-ACT PLAYS

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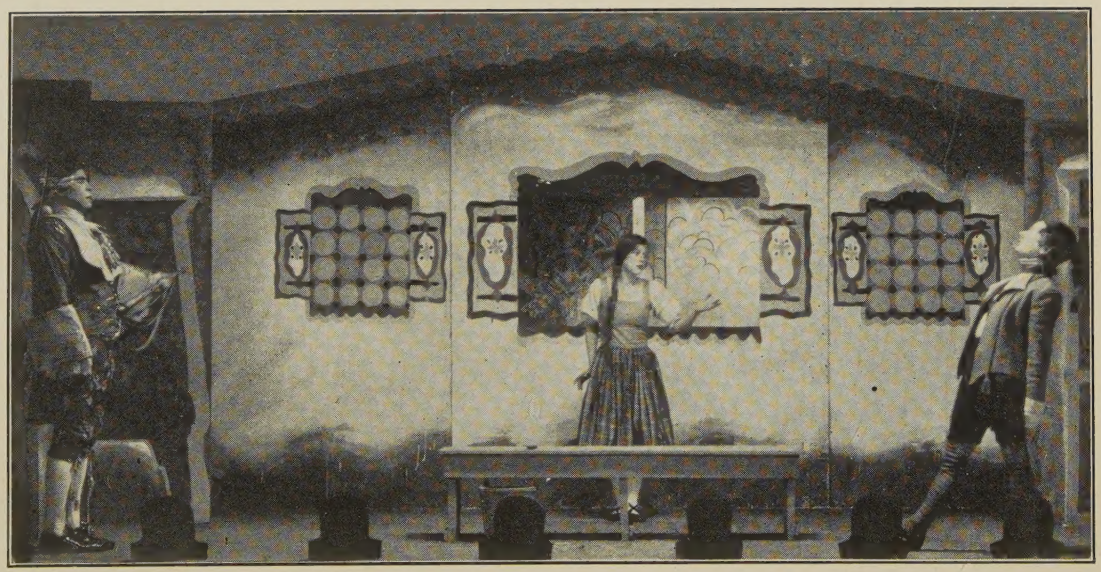

Hans Bulow's Last Puppet

YALE ONE-ACT PLAYS

EDITED WITH A FOREWORD

BY

GEORGE PIERCE BAKER

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To

EDWARD S. HARKNESS

In gratitude for his foresight and generosity in founding the Department of Drama in Yale University, these six one-act plays are dedicated.

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FOREWORD

The six one-act plays included in this volume have been selected from a much larger number written in the past four years in Playwriting courses of the Department of Drama, Yale University. Produced originally on a small "experimental" stage, which in its dimensions and equipment rather closely corresponds to the conditions facing amateur dramatic organizations throughout the country, and played successfully by actors with no large amount of special training, the plays will, it is hoped, provide the material and the dramatic possibilities such amateur organizations need.

If the volume is approved by the public for which it is intended, other volumes of selected one-act plays from the Department of Drama at Yale will be published from time to time.

George P. Baker,
Department of Drama,
Yale University

THE MISTRESS

BY

MAURICE GNESIN

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CHARACTERS

VASIA, SON OF STEPAN
STEPAN
KSENIA
A PRIEST

First produced Nov. 22, 23, and 24, 1926, by the Department of Drama, Yale University.

THE MISTRESS

The scene is a log-hut in the mining section of Northern New York. The place is clean and tidy. The walls are covered with plaster, but the plaster has fallen off in many places, revealing the wood underneath. Up-stage on the Right there is a stove. Supper is being cooked on it. Down stage a table and some chairs, all of cheap wood, unpainted, but scrubbed clean. There is a door down stage Right leading out of the hut, and a door Center leading into the interior of the house. In the upper Left corner hang cheap lithographic images of the Virgin Mary and some other saints, and on a plank of wood nailed across the corner burns a vigil lamp. Stage Left two small square windows.

The illumination comes from a kerosene lamp. The time is early evening in winter.

VASIA

I'll not steal from Dad, Ksenia.

KSENIA

It's your own money. Didn't you work alongside of him since you came to America?

VASIA

Sure, but . . .

KSENIA

Why did you give it to him?

VASIA

Didn't give it. He took the money.

KSENIA

And if he goes to Russia with it?

VASIA

He won't go. He can't.

KSENIA

Or he'll send it home, for your wife and your folks to come here.

VASIA (*he rises, and puts his arms around her shoulder*)

You know I don't care about Masha, I never did. It is you I love.

[*He kisses her.*

KSENIA (*releasing herself*)

Why did you marry her then?

VASIA

Did they ask me? You know, how it was at home. Besides I was only seventeen, young and foolish.

KSENIA

You are not overwise now. Vasia, take the money, and let's go. Let's go before there's trouble.

VASIA

What is the matter with you? Always time enough to go away.

KSENIA

May God grant it.

VASIA

Time enough.

[*There is the sound of the stamping of feet on the porch.* KSENIA *goes to the door, but before she reaches it, the door opens, and a* PRIEST *enters. The* PRIEST *is a man of about forty, thin, with an ineffectual chin, mild gray eyes, and a thin sharp nose the end of which is red with frost. His hair, smooth and brown, is combed back, and falls to his shoulders. He wears a wide-brimmed, round-topped black hat. His overcoat is lined with fur. He wears a cassock of gray serge. Around his neck is a silver chain with a pendant cross.*

KSENIA

Good evening, Father.

PRIEST

Good evening.

[*He takes off his overcoat, crosses to the ikon corner, and prays. The words of the prayer are unheard. He then crosses to the stove and warms his hands over the fire. The two others watch him uneasily.* VASIA *is at the down-stage window.* KSENIA *is at Center. She motions* VASIA *in the direction of the* PRIEST, *but he doesn't budge.* KSENIA *crosses to the* PRIEST.

KSENIA

Bless me, Father.

PRIEST (*half turning*)

Eh? What? I've no blessing for you.

KSENIA

Didn't I go to confession last week?

PRIEST

I told you I'll absolve you if you leave him. You've a husband of your own. Such a sin God himself can't forgive. No. (*To* VASIA *who is crossing to the center door.*) And you! You can run away from me. From God—no.

VASIA

I am not running. Only I've heard all this before. [*He goes out.*

PRIEST

That's the kind he is. No respect for his spiritual father. Leave him, I tell you. Leave him before there's a greater sin.

KSENIA

I won't leave him. This is my last word. You can put any penance on me, and I'll bear it. If you say to me: "Burn a pound candle before the Saviour in the church the year around," I'll do it.

PRIEST

And how will you do it? It costs money.

KSENIA

Vasia will give it to me. And if he didn't, I'd steal it.

PRIEST

No, no, no. As long as you live in sin, the Lord will not look at your candle if it weighed ten pounds. He'd not look at it.

KSENIA (*after a short pause*)

So there'll be no blessing?

PRIEST

I can't do it. God's church, you know. . . . (*Crosses to pick up his coat.*) If Vasia's father isn't here. . . .

KSENIA

Stepan'll be here soon. Sit down and I'll pour you some tea.

PRIEST

What for? It isn't necessary. I'll come later.

KSENIA

Sit down. I'll not eat you alive. Anybody waiting for you?

PRIEST

Who is there to wait? . . . No, but . . . Well, pour the tea.

KSENIA (*pouring the tea*)

Saw your cook this morning. Drunk. I suppose you're fasting again?

PRIEST

Why fast? There is no need to fast. I found there, at home, a slice of bread, and drank some water. There is always a crust of bread. God's food.
[*He drinks the tea avidly, swallowing the liquid in big gulps out of the saucer.*

KSENIA

You'll live long on God's food. Why don't you drive her out?

PRIEST

And where'll I send her? She'll not go, anyway.

KSENIA

You're a good man, a godly man. All the same a woman ought to do what she's hired for. (*Meanwhile she is cutting a piece of pie.*) What do you want to see Stepan about?

PRIEST

Oh, just—he asked me to come. "Do me a favor," he said, "and come."

KSENIA

He didn't say why?

PRIEST (*apparently concealing*)

No. "I have some business," he said.

KSENIA (*sets the pie before him*)

Shall I pour you some more tea?

PRIEST

Yes. It's blowing for a storm. Just walked across the way, and got cold through and through.

KSENIA

Perhaps, I better give you some brandy?

PRIEST

Yes, one could drink some brandy. Brandy's good for the stomach.

[KSENIA *puts the brandy on the table.*

PRIEST

Only you understand. I know nothing, and I'll tell you nothing.

KSENIA

I am not asking you.

PRIEST

All right, all right. You're a clever woman. Much too clever for such as he. (*Points in the direction of the door where* VASIA *went out.*) I'll say that for you. But you can't fool me. And there'll be no blessing for you.

KSENIA

I don't want your blessing. But there is something, Father . . .

PRIEST

I knew, eh? I knew. What is it?

KSENIA

You see . . . there is . . . I am . . .

PRIEST (*imitating her*)

You see . . . there is . . . I see nothing.

KSENIA

Well, there is going to be a baby.

PRIEST (*jumping up*)

A baby . . . Well, there you are . . . A new idea. A baby. . . But see here . . . How . . . That's not . . .

KSENIA (*watching him with amusement and contempt*)

What are you jumping about for? Anything new about it?

PRIEST

Good. A baby. It is no business of mine. I told you before. It isn't my fault.

KSENIA (*looking at him with mild contempt*)

Nobody's blaming you.

PRIEST

What do you want then?

KSENIA

Will you christen him?

PRIEST

And I'll not christen him. No. (*As if from the pulpit.*) Children which out of wedlock, blessed by the church of God, are born, shall not be christened. That's the law.

KSÉNIA

Is his soul to burn in hell because of your laws?

PRIEST

You should have thought of that before.

KSENIA

Thought what? When a man and a woman live together . . .

PRIEST

Quiet. If you're not afraid of God, you might at least take shame before my priestly office.

KSENIA

But there is a soul in the child.

PRIEST

A heathen soul. If you had got him with your husband—

KSENIA

Where is he? Catch the wind in the field. Are there any laws here to make your husband live with you? Should I have gone from hand to hand?

PRIEST

God forbid.

KSENIA

You say it yourself. A young woman needs a man. That is the way God made us. (*The conclusive argument brings a pause. There is the stamping of feet on the porch.* KSENIA *jumps up.*) Will you christen him, Father?

PRIEST

Later, we'll speak about it later.

[*Stepan comes in, dressed in the overalls of a miner under a sheepskin coat. He is fifty, tall and strong, though his shoulders are somewhat bent. His features are large, and his face is an unsmiling face.*

STEPAN (*taking off his coat*)

Good evening, Father. Dark outdoors, and blowing. A bad night. (*Crosses to the ikons and prays.*) *Sit* down, father. (*Both sit.*) Why are you standing there like a scarecrow in a pea-field? Pour some tea.

KSENIA

I'll stand if I want to.

STEPAN (*gruffly, but not angrily*)

Shut up . . . you! Tea!

[KSENIA *hands him the tea.*

STEPAN

And get out.

KSENIA

It's nice enough for me right here.

STEPAN

I've got some business with the father, not for your ears, you bitch.

KSENIA

Don't you call me a bitch.

STEPAN

What you are, that I call you. Go when you're told.

KSENIA

I am not afraid of you.

STEPAN

Out! (*Raises his fist.*) I'll hit you once, and they'll carry you out. To the churchyard, maybe.

[*The* PRIEST *from behind* STEPAN *motions her to go, and she does so. She is not afraid, however.*

PRIEST (*To* STEPAN *who is standing with his hand clenched*)

And you, Stepan, hold your temper. How far is it from sin?

STEPAN

You're right, Father. God punished me with the

strength of a bull. And He says to me: "Work," He says, "Stepan. Labor. But don't fight. No." And I don't ever take a drink for fear I'll get into a fight. All the same it's fate. One time I hit a man, and right there all my troubles started.

PRIEST

How did it happen?

STEPAN

It was a tax collector. He came one time in a hungry year. Nothing to eat in the hut, and as for money . . . I told him so and so. And he: "What business is it of mine?" he says. "The tzar's treasury can't do without taxes. I'll take your horse, and your cow," he says. And there was more talk. Only I got mad at the end, and hit him, just once.
[*He looks at his fist.*

PRIEST

Did you altogether . . . that is . . .

STEPAN

No. God saved me. But he lay in the hospital six months or more.

PRIEST (*shaking his head*)

A sin.

STEPAN

Sure, a sin. If there was no sin, I'd be sitting at home, in a Christian land, a peasant-landowner. As it is, my land's waiting for me. And here I am, in a heathen land, digging for iron, like a convict.

PRIEST

It's the will of Providence. Only it isn't bad here for you. You earn a lot of money.

STEPAN

What's money to a man buried underground from the sight of God? Nor the sun warms you, nor the rain wets you.

PRIEST

Still . . . it's free here. No tax collectors bother you, no policemen.

STEPAN

They were our own people, Father. Orthodox Russian people they were.

PRIEST

That's so, that's so.

STEPAN

There is no order here. A man doesn't know his place. You look at the master. What thousands he earns! And goes around dressed so that you can't tell him from a miner. Is that the right way? He doesn't even speak a Christian tongue.

PRIEST

There you say the truth. Take now the churches and the priests. God save us. They are neither a candle for God, nor a poker for the devil. No cross, no ikon, no vestments. It's not an orthodox land, there you are right.

STEPAN (*looking around*)

Did you bring everything?

PRIEST (*pulling out of the bottomless pocket of his cassock all the appurtenances for writing a letter*)

Yes. Whom shall I write?

STEPAN (*slowly*)

Write to my dear wife, Matrena Nikolaevna: "We, thanks be to God, have saved up by hard work enough money, so that now, Matresha, you and the children, and Vasia's wife can come to us, to this America." Perhaps I better speak slower?

PRIEST

Never mind. I'll catch up. It's not for nothing they beat us at the seminary.

STEPAN

Beating, that's nothing. They beat me, too. But as for science, they taught me nothing. Where were we?

PRIEST

"to this America." What I want to tell you, Stepan: There'll be trouble with Ksenia when they come.

STEPAN

She's charmed him, the witch.

PRIEST

Why "charm"? Things like that happen.

STEPAN

No, don't tell me. Before she came he was an obedient, quiet son. "Lower than grass, and quieter than water,'" as the proverb goes. Look at him now.

PRIEST

He did behave rudely to me when I came. Still, he is not bad.

STEPAN

It's all that . . . Ksenia. She's got to go.

PRIEST

And soon.

STEPAN

So there'll be no trace of her in the village. I'll tell her to-day.

PRIEST

But be careful about it, be careful. The slower, brother, you ride the farther you get.

STEPAN

I'll take care of it.

PRIEST

I hope you do it quietly. She's a woman not like most. She makes up her mind where she's going, and she cuts straight for it.

STEPAN

She'll find me in the way.

PRIEST

But careful. She's like you, Stepan. She has a temper.

STEPAN

We'll see who's master in my house. Where were we? Yes. "And I send you the money for your journey by post."

PRIEST

"By post."

STEPAN

"Sell the hut, and the bit of land, but see you get a good price for them. And get your passports right away. You'll have to give something to the village clerk. Offer him a rouble. And if he, the devil's son, is stubborn, give him another half, and not a copec more." Have you written all that?

PRIEST

Yes.

STEPAN

So, you address it, and I'll take care of it to-morrow.

PRIEST (*gathering up his things and getting ready to go*)

You ought to have a mass sung. So that God will bless them on their way.

STEPAN

Yes. Only they'll do it there. It's better there, in a Christian land.

PRIEST

There of course. But you ought to have one sung here. It's not a joke such a journey.

STEPAN

All right. Sing a mass early to-morrow. How much will you take?

PRIEST

We'll see, we'll see. I am not a highway robber. At six then.

STEPAN

At six. But don't mumble the mass. Sing it so a man can make out the words. God himself can't understand you, when you . . .

PRIEST

Everything'll be done properly.

[*Prays to the ikons, while* STEPAN *is putting on his overcoat, and lighting a lantern.*

STEPAN

I'll light you across.

PRIEST (*at the door*)

Oooh, what a storm, God forgive us.

[*They go out. The center door opens slowly, and* KSENIA *comes in, goes to the porch door, and bolts it.*

KSENIA

Vasia. (VASIA *comes in reluctantly.*) Now will you take the money?

VASIA

But it is bad, this stealing.

KSENIA

Stealing! Stealing! Did he earn it all himself?

VASIA

Still he is my father.

KSENIA

What is "father" to me? You've got to think about ourselves.

VASIA

But if he catches us, he'll get angry, God help us.

KSENIA

You're a coward. That's what's the matter with you. A dishrag.

VASIA

Don't be angry, Ksenia. That's the way God made me.

KSENIA

And you, remake yourself! Where would I be if I had no more sense than you? Cooking and cleaning for a miner's boarding house. Well, will you take the money?

VASIA

Don't make me steal. Let's go away, quietly. Just go away.

KSENIA

And leave the money here, and a baby coming?

VASIA

I'll work for you and the child. I'll work hard. And we can live in peace. You'll see. Just you and I and the baby.

KSENIA

Will you take the money?

VASIA

I'll not steal. He'll kill me.

KSENIA

So. Then . . . (*She takes a kitchen knife.*) I'll have to do it myself. (*Pries a rectangular piece out of the flooring.*) If I had sense, I'd go away without you, you . . . bungler. (*Pulls out a sack stuffed with bills on the table.*) Half of it is yours.

VASIA

What . . . what a . . . pile of money! A mountain.

KSENIA

Divide it.

VASIA

Half of it is mine. I worked. That is true though, isn't it?

KSENIA

You worked. Divide it.

VASIA

When you look at it that way, half of it is mine.

KSENIA

Don't waste time. Divide it.

VASIA (*nervously dividing the money into two piles.* KSENIA *is at the door*)

And what if he sends for the police?

KSENIA

America is a free land. You work, and you keep your money. Divide it, or he'll catch us.

VASIA

A dollar and a dollar. A five and a five, and another five and . . .

[*He listens fearfully.*

KSENIA

Count. There is nobody there.

VASIA

I thought, I heard . . . And another five, and a dollar and a dollar. There is someone on the porch.

KSENIA

Fool, I'm listening. No! There is no one there.

VASIA (*wiping off his perspiration*)

Where was I? Better begin at the beginning.

KSENIA

You haven't all night.

VASIA

But I am all mixed up.

KSENIA

Sh . . . Someone's coming. Quick. Divide it anyway.

[VASIA, *stunned with fright, remains immovable, with the money clutched in his hands.* KSENIA *takes it from him, divides it into two parts hap-hazard, and stuffing one part into the sack, gives it to* VASIA.

KSENIA

Put that back.

[*She hides the other half in her bosom. Then, realizing that* VASIA *is still standing, looking dazed at the*

back, she takes the money from him. Footsteps are heard on the porch. Then someone tries the door.

STEPAN

Hey there! Open!

KSENIA (*going toward the hiding place*)

Who is there?

[*She puts the money away hurriedly and covers the hole.*

STEPAN

I.

KSENIA

I am coming. (*She goes toward the door, but realizing that* VASIA *has not yet recovered from the shock of fear.*) Get into the next room. It's written on your forehead.

[*Pushes him through inner door; then she opens the porch door.*

STEPAN

What did you lock yourself in for, you striped devils?

KSENIA

The wind kept throwing the door open. Don't curse. You didn't freeze.

STEPAN

You'll freeze soon enough. Pour some tea and get supper ready. (*She pours it.*) Where's Vasia?

KSENIA

In there.

STEPAN

Call him.

KSENIA

What for?

STEPAN

It's not your business. Call him when I tell you.

KSENIA (*after a short pause*)

Vasia, Dad wants you.

STEPAN

And you get out. We'll get along without you.

KSENIA

I'll stay.

VASIA (*entering fearfully*)

What do you want?

STEPAN

Got to talk to you. Only put her out first.

VASIA

What for? (*Looks at* STEPAN *and loses courage.*) You better go.

KSENIA

I won't go.

STEPAN

I'll throw you out.

KSENIA

Try it. You think you're at home in the village.

STEPAN

That's it. There is no proper order here, in America. Stay then, and the devil take you. You'll hear pleasant news. Vasia, I've sent for our folks.

VASIA (*feigning surprise badly*)

Eh? what?

STEPAN

Gone deaf? I said, our folks are coming. That's why the priest came, to write a letter. They'll be coming soon. I sent for your Masha, too.

KSENIA

You're in a great hurry.

STEPAN

What?

KSENIA

I said, you were in a great hurry. You heard me.

STEPAN

Shut up.

KSENIA

All right, I'll shut up.

STEPAN

That's how it is then, Vasia. It's bad, if your wife comes and finds you living in sin with . . . her.

VASIA

Why did you send for her then?

STEPAN

Is she a wife to you? or isn't she? And this one, throw her out. You've played enough.

KSENIA

You can't throw me out. I'm not that kind.

VASIA

Don't quarrel with him, Kseniushka. I will, myself. You can't do that, Dad. She is also a human being.

STEPAN

A woman. She'll weep, and then she'll forget. She's forgotten her own husband.

KSENIA

He left me.

STEPAN

And a good job.

VASIA

Dad, you'd better not . . .

STEPAN

Shut up. Your father is telling you. To-morrow, when I come home from work, there shall be no trace, nor smell of her in this place.

KSENIA

I am not going away.

VASIA

Where is she to go?

STEPAN

Let her go where she wants.

KSENIA

I am staying right here.

STEPAN

You're not.

VASIA

You can't throw her out. It's not a Christian way.

STEPAN

She is going.

VASIA

Why can't you let us live in peace? She loves me and . . .

STEPAN

And your wife? Doesn't she love you?

VASIA

Who knows about that? You married us. Nobody asked her or me.

STEPAN

Why ask? That's why we are. Parents, that is.

VASIA

Still, one can't do that way.

STEPAN (*crossing to* VASIA)

Can't! (*Grasps him by his shirt and shakes him.*) Can't, is it? I'll . . .

VASIA

But why do you . . . I didn't mean . . .

KSENIA

You let him go.

STEPAN

Will you throw her out?

KSENIA

You better ask me first. I'll not go.

STEPAN (*letting* VASIA *go*)

You'll go.

KSENIA

No, not now. Why didn't you think about it three years ago? He had a wife then.

STEPAN

I thought you'd live a while, and then—why? It's a usual thing.

KSENIA

So. It wasn't that you wanted somebody to cook for you, and to mend for you, and to keep the hut clean for you, while you saved your money?

STEPAN

That's what you are for, women.

KSENIA

And when you fell ill who looked after you? Who was it didn't sleep night after night when you had the fever?

STEPAN

Nobody asked you to do it. . . .

KSENIA

Without me you would have died like a dog.

STEPAN

And maybe I wouldn't.

KSENIA

Listen, I'm telling you. I've been a housekeeper for the two of you for three years, and I've been a good wife to Vasia . . .

STEPAN

Wife is it? You slut.

KSENIA

And if you don't like your daughter-in-law, you can clear out.

STEPAN

What! Are you telling me to go from my own hut?

KSENIA

Yes. Think I am afraid of you?

VASIA

Ksenia. Are you out of your senses?

KSENIA

Maybe I am. I suffered and worked, for you, cursed ones, and now . . .

VASIA

But I didn't say . . .

STEPAN

Yes. We're telling you to go. And you'll go. If you don't, I'll throw you out, so's you'll count your bones.

KSENIA

You're boasting early.

STEPAN

You'll see.

KSENIA

And if you do, I'll stay on the porch. I'll scratch your Masha's eyes out. He's my man.

STEPAN

You will, eh? I'll show you right now.

KSENIA

You'll show me nothing. I'll scratch her eyes out, and I'll tear her hair, and I'll tear her face. She'll not be glad she came.

VASIA

Ksenia, for God's sake don't. He'll . . .

KSENIA

I'll not keep quiet.

STEPAN

You'll . . . (*Controlling himself with difficulty.*) For the time being, get supper. And to-morrow there shall be no sign of you here, or you'll wish there wasn't.

KSENIA

So? Get your own supper.

VASIA

Kseniushka, don't make him mad.

STEPAN

Supper, or I'll . . . (KSENIA *goes to the cupboard,* STEPAN *takes out his pay envelope, and separates the money into two parts, places one part on the table, the other in a pocketbook.*) Vasia, give me your money.

VASIA (*who is watching him out of the corner of his eye*)

What?

STEPAN

The money. You got your pay, didn't you?

VASIA

Oh, the pay? Sure. (*Looks for it in his pockets.*) Where did I . . .

STEPAN

Well.

VASIA

I . . . don't . . . No . . . I'll find it . . . later.

STEPAN

You'll find it now.

VASIA (*pretending to look some more*)

Here, here it is.

STEPAN (*takes the envelope, counts the money, separates a couple of bills and hands them to* VASIA.) There. (*Then he goes to the hiding place.*) There is no need to hide this now. To-morrow we'll send it.

[VASIA *looks helplessly and fearfully from his father to* KSENIA. KSENIA *motions silence.*

STEPAN (*taking out the money*)

For three years I've been hiding it here. A safe place.

KSENIA

Why don't you put it in the bank?

STEPAN

Who knows them, the banks?

KSENIA

But somebody might have stolen it here.

STEPAN

Stolen? A thief, he has no sense. He'll never guess. (*He walks to his seat, dangling the money happily.*) It is a lot of money we've saved up, Brother. One could buy thirty acres of land with it at home. Good land.

[*He puts his hand into the sack, and remains as if frozen with horror.* VASIA *fidgets under his unseeing stare.* KSENIA *faces it with an obvious exertion of her will. She's frightened but tries to appear calm.*

KSENIA

What's the matter with you?

STEPAN

Eh?

KSENIA

What's the matter? You look . . .

STEPAN (*pulling out the crumpled money, he stares fixedly at it, as if to get the meaning of it*)
Robbed!

KSENIA
Robbed! Why, there it is.

STEPAN
Robbed! More than half of it gone.

KSENIA
Maybe you're mistaken. Go on, count.

STEPAN
They've stolen it.

KSENIA
There you are! "A safe place."

STEPAN
Last night I counted it. It was all there. Did you go out of the hut to-day?

KSENIA
No . . . Yes, I did. I went to the store to buy pork for the pie.

STEPAN
Was the door locked?

KSENIA
No. You never told me . . . I never lock it.

STEPAN
You don't . . . (*Pause.*) And why didn't he take it all? The thief, eh? Vasia, why didn't he take it all? Eh, Vasia? Why don't you answer me?

VASIA

What can I? I can't say anything . . .

STEPAN (*heavily*)

You can't. So you don't know anything about it?

VASIA

What do you want, Dad? I'll swear on the cross . . .

STEPAN

Don't lie. There is nobody but you to steal the money, you bloodsuckers. So that's the kind you are. So you watched me, and said to yourself: "The old fool, thinks he's hiding it from us!" (*He goes over to* VASIA, *who tries to move away.*) So. Give me the money.

[KSENIA *motions him to keep quiet.*

VASIA

I haven't the money.

KSENIA

Why would he steal his own money?

STEPAN

His own money?

KSENIA

Sure, yours and his.

STEPAN

Your own money, Brother, eh?

VASIA

I didn't say . . .

STEPAN

Listen, Vasia. You stole. Give it back, before a sin happens, give it back.

VASIA

I haven't it.

STEPAN (*grasps him*)

Give it back! Or I'll choke the life out of you.
[*He grabs his throat with his other hand.*

VASIA

Ksenia!

STEPAN

Where is the money?

KSENIA

He hasn't the money. I took it.

STEPAN (*slowly releases* VASIA *and pushes him away.* VASIA *goes into the corner for safety*)

You took it? And you tell it to me? Give it back.

KSENIA

I will not. If you want to settle the business quietly, good. One half is yours. If I took more, I'll return it.

STEPAN (*slowly*)

I am to settle accounts with you?

KSENIA

With me. Half the money is ours. Let him have his half. We'll go away.

STEPAN

How do you mean—we?

KSENIA

Vasia and I

STEPAN (*in rage*)

I'll tear you—

KSENIA

Don't you hurry too much, Stepan Vasilievich. Nobody knows where the money is, but me. You'll lose it, this money.

STEPAN (*overcome with the feeling of helplessness*)

What is the matter with you, Ksenyushka? Vasia and I worked for five years to save this money, five years buried underground, digging, to get . . . to bring the folks here.

KSENIA

What about me?

STEPAN

But we have children there, young children. You are a strong woman, and a buxom woman, you can take care of yourself.

KSENIA

That's what I am doing, taking care of myself.

STEPAN

Give me back the money. I ask you honorably, give it back. I am an old man. I have no strength to work in the mines many years more. Must I die a lone old man in this foreign land, without wife and children?

KSENIA

That's your business. If you'll get along without his wife . . .

STEPAN

What is she to do? Starve?

KSENIA

And what am I to do?

STEPAN

So you won't give it to me?

KSENIA

No.

STEPAN

You, bitch! Do you want me to kneel before you and beg?

KSENIA

Don't kneel. But I'll not give you the money.

STEPAN

You will.

KSENIA

We need it ourselves.

STEPAN

You need it?

KSENIA

Yes.

VASIA

Give it to him, and . . .

KSENIA

No. Am I going begging with a baby?

STEPAN

What baby?

KSENIA

Ours.

STEPAN

You lie. There's no baby.

KSENIA

There will be in three months.

STEPAN

After three years? You lie. (*He rolls up his sleeve.*) I asked you in kindness. But you . . .

KSENIA

You may beat me, you may cut me in small pieces, I'll not tell you where the money is.

STEPAN

For the last time I ask you, will you give it to me?

VASIA

Give it to him, give it.

KSENIA

I've no money for you.

STEPAN

I'll give you fifty rubles, for the child, and let you go.

KSENIA

I'll not go, you can't buy me.

STEPAN (*grasping her blouse at the throat with a strength which holds her immovable*)

Give me the money.

KSENIA

Don't lay your hands on me, you old bear.

STEPAN

The money!

KSENIA

You'll not see the money any more than your ears.

STEPAN

The money!

KSENIA

No.

[STEPAN *hits her over the head once. There is a slight groan and then her body relaxes. But he continues to hold her for the moment. The hit surprises him. He looks at his hand, and his arm falls downward in convulsive relaxation. The left hand for an instant holds* KSENIA *as strongly as ever, then his fingers let go their hold, and she falls to the floor, or rather crumples.* VASIA, *from his corner looks at* KSENIA, *then he steals his way toward the door, and when near it, makes a dash for it, crying "Help! Help!"* STEPAN *catches him with one hand on the back of his neck, the other over his mouth, then throws him across the room as if he were as light as a feather.*

STEPAN

I'll kill you! Shut up. (VASIA *goes into the farthest corner.*) Pour some water over her.

[VASIA *crawls toward the right corner of the room, takes some water in a big cup, and comes over to* KSENIA, *but moves back.*

STEPAN

What's the matter?

VASIA

Her eyes . . . her eyes are terrible.

STEPAN

Pour the water.

VASIA (*sprinkles the water awkwardly with his hand. No result. He does it again, and comes closer*)
Ah!

STEPAN

What?

VASIA

She's . . . she's dead.

STEPAN

Coward. Pour some more!

VASIA

I already . . .

STEPAN (*looks at her, then bends down, and listens to her heart. His face rises slowly with an expression of terror*)

Dead. Give peace to her soul, Lord! (*He makes the sign of the cross. Rises, walks over to the table and sits with his arm outstretched on the table. His hand folds into a fist and he looks at it.*) Strength! So . . .

(VASIA *is weeping in the corner audibly.*) Shut up. Bring a bedcover. (VASIA *goes into the next room.*) Without absolution. God's punishment. (VASIA *returns and covers* KSENIA. *They make the sign of the cross.* VASIA *retires to the corner.*) You know where the money is.

VASIA

I know.

STEPAN

Get it.

VASIA

I am afraid. It's in her bosom.

STEPAN

You . . . (*Gets the money, though with reluctance.*) Sit down there. (*Points to the other side of the table.* VASIA *obeys. After a slight pause,*) Take this money Take this money and go away.

VASIA

Home?

STEPAN

Where else? Home. Out of this cursed land. Look where it's brought us? A Christian soul murdered, without absolution. A soul. It's a great sin . . . A great . . . What did I say? . . . Go away in the morning.

VASIA

And . . . you?

STEPAN

I'll stay.

VASIA

But they'll . . .

STEPAN

Let them . . . I'll stay. You can run from men . . . From God . . . you'll not get far. It is Fate. Listen. Listen hard. You're the head of the family now. When you get home to the village, go to the miller, Peter Nikolaev, and buy from him the land beyond the mill, buy it for wheat. It's good land . . . Good land . . . good. . . .

[*The curtain comes down slowly as he goes on with his directions.*

HANS BULOW'S LAST PUPPET[1]

BY

GRACE DORCAS RUTHENBURG

[1] This may be played by genuine puppets or by human actors with stylized scenery, costumes, movements and gestures. It was originally succesfully produced in the second manner.

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CHARACTERS

TILDA
HANS
HERALD
OLD CLOTHES MAN
CAT

First produced at the University Theatre Nov. 6–10, 1928, by the Department of Drama, Yale University.

HANS BULOW'S LAST PUPPET

Scene: The shop of HANS BULOW, *puppetmaker. A barren room, doors left and right, a workbench near center, a bucket of paste with a brush protruding, and a few straight chairs. A latticed window at the back opens on the street. In one corner is a built-in cupboard with doors, all much worn. It is the day of the ball of the Markgraf of Munich. As the curtain rises,* HANS BULOW *is seated on the workbench with his head in his hands. His daughter* TILDA, *a girl of about fifteen, is bending over the paste-bucket on the floor left of the bench. One long golden braid dangles over her left shoulder. The other one is cropped short. Father and daughter are both poorly dressed.*

HANS' *head drops lower and he sobs.* TILDA *leaves the paste-bucket and runs over to him.*

TILDA (*comfortingly*)

There is still my right braid, Father!

HANS (*shaking his head*)

Heaven forbid that I should take your right braid also! Pig that I was to use the left one. It would never have happened had it not been the puppet of the Countess of Dresden. Besides, if we should get an order now, there is nothing to make a head to go under the hair!

TILDA (*going to the cupboard*)

Oh, I am sure—

HANS (*his head dropping again*)

The sign that has swung on the same hook outside our door for two hundred years must now come down! Run, Tilda, remove it before someone comes to see our disgrace.

TILDA

Surely there is something left in the cupboard with which to make puppets. A scrap of Aunt Sophronia's wedding gown—!

[*The Herald toots distantly outside.*

HANS

No, no! I used the last bit to make a sailor-boy for the Duke of Dublin.

TILDA (*rummaging*)

At least I think I saw one last pie-dish with which you used to make such shining armor!

HANS

The last pie-dish went into the manufacture of a knight for the Duchess of Bloomsbury. There is nothing! . . . Bring in the sign!

TILDA

No, no, Father! (*There is a tootling of a trumpet outside.*) Listen! . . . The Markgraf of Munich is giving a ball to the Prince tonight. Who knows but what he may want a fine marionette with which to entertain him?

HANS (*jumping up in horror*)

No, no! Don't tell me that the Markgraf of Munich is in town!

TILDA

Giving a ball. I heard it in the market from his own cook! Listen, you can hear his herald.

HANS

No, no! bring in the sign! Bring it in quickly!

TILDA

But, Father, he may give you an order, and the money in advance with which to buy materials.

HANS (*striding about and shaking his head, distraught*)

The honor of the house of Hans Bulow is wrecked, routed, ruined—

TILDA

Just think! The footman may come at any minute to that door in his golden tassels, to pound on it and say, "Open, Hans Bulow! Open in the name of the law! Here are three golden gulden to make my master a puppet by nightfall!"

HANS (*terrified*)

No, no!

TILDA

How we should work, Father! How our fingers would fly!

HANS

No, Tilda!

TILDA

But he might! So easily he might!

HANS

I couldn't bear it.

TILDA

And the sign would keep on swinging on the same hook—

[*The Herald toots nearer.*

HANS (*with agitation*)

Bring it in! Bring it in now!

TILDA

But why, Father?

HANS (*shaking on his bench*)

If only I had not spent the money for your mother's funeral wreath!

TILDA

What money, Father? What are you talking about?

HANS

Tilda, my daughter, it was for your mother's memory. But oh, if I had only saved out one gulden!

TILDA

What gulden?

HANS

The honor of our two-hundred-year-old shop is gone! Six months ago the Markgraf of Munich did indeed order a puppet for this very ball— Three golden gulden he put into my hand saying, "Make me a puppet to show the Prince"— Three golden gulden!—"One of your miraculous puppets"— Three gulden he put into

my hand and said, "Make me such a puppet as no one has ever seen." Three golden gulden, and I spent them two days later for your mother's funeral wreath. (*The tootling is growing louder down the street.*) . . . It is enough that misfortune should have swept our shelves and dislodged our sign from its hook, but to batten down our shutters upon a stained reputation. . . . It is unbearable! . . . (HANS *sobs.*) . . . Quick! Quick, bring in the sign! Perhaps he may forget for the present and I can some day repay him. (TILDA *starts for the door. As she is about to open it the tootling grows very loud indeed and there is a knock.*) . . . It is too late!

TILDA

No, no, it may be the grocer boy!

HANS

It is he!

TILDA

Or the Old Clothes Man!

HANS

It is he! It is he! His trumpet!

TILDA

Quick! We'll hide!

HANS (*following her toward the cupboard*)

Yes, yes, we'll hide! (*He stops at the cupboard door.*) No, no, it would not be honorable! (*He runs back toward the door, where the knocking continues.*) . . . But there is no possibility of giving the Markgraf a puppet! . . . (*Knock. He scuttles back to-*

ward the cupboard.) . . . But my name as a tradesman! . . . An artisan!

[*Knock. He runs back toward the door and balances midways, first on one foot and then on the other.* TILDA *comes out of the cupboard. The door opens and the Herald of the Markgraf of Munich stands on the threshold in his golden tassels.* HANS *and* TILDA *bow.*

HERALD (*tootling*)

Hans Bulow!

HANS

Sir!

[*He bows nervously.*

HERALD

I have the honor and the pleasure to ask of you the puppet which my master the Markgraf of Munich is to display before the Prince!

HANS (*bowing*)

If your Worship please, it is not yet finished.

HERALD

What!

TILDA (*curtseying*)

It takes so long for the carving, sir!

HERALD

It has been ordered six months.

HANS (*earnestly*)

For ordinary puppets, yes, six months is sufficient . . .

HERALD

Well?

HANS

But for the puppets of the House of Bulow—

HERALD

Yes?

HANS

No!

TILDA (*shaking her head*)

No, no!

HERALD

But—!

HANS

For the House of Bulow, it takes no less than six months and one hour.

HERALD

But the Markgraf cannot wait to see it!

TILDA (*pleadingly*)

Just one little hour!

HERALD (*softening*)

Well—well—I could I suppose dally at the tavern for a few moments longer. Very well! Have it ready when I come back!

[*He goes, tootling on his trumpet. As soon as he is gone,* HANS *hops about desperately.*

HANS

Nothing! Nothing left in the house! Tilda, your

father is a good-for-nothing, a scoundrel, a rogue, a-a-thief!

[*The* OLD CLOTHES MAN *outside, calling,* "Bustles, basques and furbelows, fiddles, flasks and amber. All good people here below, I buy antiques remember!"

TILDA

Listen, Father! There goes the Old Clothes Man! We will pawn something!

HANS

There is nothing left to pawn!

TILDA

I know! My emerald bottle!

HANS

My dear, not your cherished bottle! Anyway, he has already refused it thirteen times. Who would take a bottle that has a crack in it? . . . But wait! There is still my gilded sword!

TILDA

Father, not your beloved sword! Besides, who would take a sword that had been used to dig up beans? The Old Clothes Man has already refused it seventeen times. (*The* OLD CLOTHES MAN *comes closer.*) . . . I know!

HANS

What?

TILDA

We will pawn the cat!

HANS

Not your cat! The companion of your childhood! How often you have loved to stroke its fur!

TILDA

For the honor of the house! Kitty, kitty, kitty! [*She runs out and brings the cat* [1] *in in her arms.*

HANS

My dear!

TILDA

See how sweetly she looks up at us! . . . (*She puts her head out of the window.*) Old Clothes Man! (*Bravely.*) . . . I'm sure he will be good to her! [*The* OLD CLOTHES MAN *puts his head through the window.*

OLD CLOTHES MAN

Buckles, basques, and furbelows—

TILDA

Dear Old Clothes Man, we have a very valuable article to sell!

OLD CLOTHES MAN

What is it?

TILDA

See! Our cat!

OLD CLOTHES MAN

Cat? Let's see her.

[1] If this is given as a puppet-play, the cat may well be a caricature.

TILDA (*stroking the cat*)

See?

OLD CLOTHES MAN

That? You call that a cat? She looks more like a muddy overshoe. I buy only sleek cats, slick cats, glossy cats, cats that have eaten lots and lots and lots and lots of rats! Haven't you anything else?

TILDA

Only my petticoat, and the ruffle's torn.

OLD CLOTHES MAN (*to* HANS)

How about you, old fellow?

HANS (*proudly*)

These socks I have on!

TILDA

Father! You will have nothing left between your breeches and your shoes!

HANS

Tilda, my dear, your darns alone should be worth a fortune.

OLD CLOTHES MAN

As usual, I see there is nothing for me here! . . . Good morning!

[*He withdraws his head.*

TILDA

Wait! Wait! I have a beautiful emerald bottle with a cork and only one crack in it!

OLD CLOTHES MAN (*irascibly*)

What! Again?

HANS (*quickly*)

She is only twitting you! But a sword now, a fine sword that saw desperate service in Zanzibar?

OLD CLOTHES MAN

I know that sword! For the eighteenth time, no! It wouldn't cut butter!

[*He goes off as the knocking begins at the door again.*

HANS

Let us open the door, Tilda, and throw ourselves on the Markgraf's mercy!

HERALD (*opening the door himself*)

What's this? What's this? I don't see any puppet yet!

HANS

I—I—

TILDA

Please, sir, the weskit is not yet seamed! Three quarters of an hour longer!

HERALD

Are you sure—?

TILDA

Oh, surely you will have it, sir! (*Ready to cry.*) Only a little three quarters of an hour!

HERALD

I don't like it, but after all I can drink another half gallon of grog. Be sharp about it!
[*The door closes behind him.*

HANS

Three quarters of an hour! What, oh what will we do? The Herald will be back in three quarters of an hour and the blotch of dishonor will rest forever on Tilda's golden hair. There is nothing else to do! . . . Tilda!

TILDA (*weeping*)

Yes, Father?

HANS

Tilda, I saw a shadow against the grating. It may be a stray scrap of silk that has blown against the house. Run look! (TILDA *runs out.* HANS *goes into the next room and brings back a huge sword.*[1] *He polishes it gently against his knee.*) Proud sword, it will go easier with my poor daughter when I am out of the way. . . . If they find me in the morning—so!—with you sticking through me, they will say, "Poor girl! Her father was a weak soul and came to a suitable end!" And then they will find her a nice position as governess. (*He lifts the sword to thrust it through his heart*) . . . How I should like to see her just once more! (*He peers longingly toward the door.*) . . . But no! I must do it quickly. . . . (*He lifts the sword again.*) . . . Poor Tilda, she won't have me to scrub the floor for her. . . . (*He goes to the cupboard and brings back a paper which he spreads on*

[1] Unless it is a puppet production, he can take it off the wall.

the floor.) [1] . . . I will fall here on this paper, where it will be easy for her to clean up afterward. . . . If I had only saved the money I spent on the funeral wreath! . . . Now then! (*He lifts the sword.*) . . . But perhaps after all it would make less trouble for her if I went out into the garden behind the empty woodhouse. . . . Yes, that is best.

[*He shoulders the sword and trots out just as* TILDA *comes in from the other side carrying the emerald bottle.*

TILDA

Poor Father Hans! Where has he gone in his sorrow, I wonder? If I could only find so much as a little ribbon on my underwear to help him! (*She looks, and shakes her head.*) Emerald bottle, no one—not even my father—knows what I know, that you were once owned by a countess and contain poison. . . . See, I have only to push this little cork in and put you to my lips. If I die now, people will say, "Poor man! He lost his only daughter yesterday. No wonder with so much grief he became addled and forgot where he put the Markgraf's puppet. . . . Then they will let him go! . . . Otherwise they might send him to the dungeon—my poor dear innocent father that only used the money to buy my mother a funeral wreath! . . . Open, little bottle! (*She starts to open it.*) . . . How thoughtless I am! If I fall down here on the floor it will be hard for him to lift me. He is not so strong as he used to be. . . . Perhaps if I lie on the bench? (*She lies down on the bench.*) . . . Little bottle, open! (*She starts to drink, and sits up suddenly.*)

[1] For puppets, the paper is already there.

. . . No, no! How stupid I am! To think of letting him find me here on the bench! He might take heart disease from the shock. . . . He shall discover me in bed and think at first I am only sleeping. In that way he can learn the truth gradually.

[*She starts toward the door, and as she does so, bumps into* HANS, *who is just coming in with the sword in his hand.*

HANS

Tilda, my dear— My darling Tilda!

[*She sees the sword.*

TILDA

What are you doing with your sword?

HANS (*forcing himself to speak lightly*)

That? I am—I am about to dig in the garden. Only think! I saw a bean coming up.

TILDA

In the middle of the winter?

HANS (*hastily*)

But you! What are you doing with your bottle?

TILDA

How silly of you not to remember. It is ink I am taking to my bedroom to write invitations for your birthday party.

HANS

But my birthday isn't till next October. (*He seizes the bottle.*) It has crossbones on it! It is poison!

TILDA (*snatching his sword*)

And you have been sharpening your sword! . . . Father! . . .

HANS

Tilda! (*They weep and embrace.*) You weren't going to leave me?

TILDA

You were going to leave *me!*

HANS

How could you!

TILDA

How could *you?*

HANS

I couldn't. I had to come back to see you once more!

TILDA

And I was trying to keep out of your sight!
[*There is a loud tootling and a knock on the door.*

TOGETHER

The Herald!

HANS

Now we must throw ourselves at the Markgraf's feet and let him do as he wills!
[*The door opens.*

HERALD

Open! Open! Scoundrel! Thief! Burglar! Confess that you have squandered the money!
[*He flings out angrily.*

HANS

Now its sign shall creak for nothing, this shop that was founded by your great-great-great-great-great-grandfather shall be draggled in the dust, and there will be an ineradicable splotch upon your golden hair!

TILDA

Father!

HANS

Tilda, let me die! They will be kinder to you!

TILDA

No! Listen!

HANS

Our name is at an end, but if I die it will be a less ignominious downfall.

TILDA

Father, will you not listen! I have a plan!

HANS

What possible plan is left? Not a cigar-box to make a limb! Not jar, pipkin nor cannister to make a head.

TILDA

Father, please!

HANS

Already the rooms grows twilight with the shadow of disgrace! Already I can feel the dust of oblivion prickling in my nostrils. We are lost! lost!

TILDA (*putting her hands over his mouth*)

Father, remember! When I was a child did I not do little dances at which you laughed?

HANS

Those were happy days!

TILDA

Did I not move my head so—! And hold my skirts out stiff and walk with wooden knees?

HANS

Yes, yes.

TILDA

Did you not call me your little puppet and threaten to hang me over the doorway if ever our sign blew down?

HANS

Yes, yes. Those merry times are passed.

TILDA

Father! You shall send me as the puppet!

HANS

As—

TILDA

See how I shall prink before the duke . . . (*She prinks.*) How I shall bow before the Queen! (*She bows.*) How I shall dance and play the flute! (*She holds an imaginary flute.*) . . . The last puppet of the House of Bulow shall be so miraculously human, so unbelievably real, that the name of our shop shall go down through all the centuries!

HANS

Alas, alas, I could never bring myself to allow you—!

TILDA

Quick!

HANS

Never shall the woe of my wrongdoing descend upon your slender shoulders!

TILDA

Please, Father!

HANS

Let you live forever, gaped at, stared at, pulled with strings, tickled by flies, chewed by moths, trampled and spun upon by spiders!—

TILDA

But our reputation!

HANS

After the ball is over you will be put in the Markgraf's Museum, to wear your heart out forever on a wall—

TILDA (*frightened*)

Hush, Father!

HANS

With other relics to frighten you! On one side a hideous mummy, and on the other a terrible mask, perhaps, to fill you with dread!

TILDA

But it will be for you!

HANS

No! A thousand times, no!

TILDA

Father—!

HANS (*slowly*)

I have it!

TILDA

What?

HANS

I shall go myself!

TILDA

No!

HANS

Why did I not think of it?

TILDA

You mustn't!

HANS

Yes, yes, Tilda. Your clever brain has found the solution of my grief! I shall go.

TILDA

I beg you—!

HANS

Never in the history of the kingdom can a shop claim such an end! A glorious end, a perfect end, an end such as no other name can ever boast! The perfect

puppet! (*He is beginning to brush himself off.*) Such excellency of workmanship! Such grace! Such dexterity! (*While uttering these words he is smoothing his hair, perking his moustache, rubbing the buckles of his shoes on his other leg.*) . . . My daughter! I have you to thank for this! (*He begins to practice walking stiff-legged.*) A puppet that can walk without strings!—See! Tilda, my dear, you have saved us! (*Tootling is heard.*) Quick! . . . Let me hide! You will deliver me at once to the Herald!
[*He disappears into the next room.*

HERALD (*throwing open the door*)

Confess! There is no puppet! (*He enters and finds* TILDA *alone.*) Ragamuffin! Scoundrel! Bulow! You have escaped!

TILDA (*drawing herself up with dignity, she speaks in a trembling voice*)

My father, sir, has absented himself for the purpose of filling an order. (*She gulps.*) I will deliver the puppet that belongs to the Markgraf of Munich! (*She goes into the next room and returns leading* HANS, *who walks stiff-legged and looks straight before him in a doll-like stare.*) Behold, sirrah! The most perfect invention our shop has boasted in its unrivaled history of two hundred years!
[*She guides the puppet to the* HERALD, *who backs off pop-eyed with astonishment.*

HERALD

That?

TILDA (*proudly*)

That!

HERALD (*backing*)

Where—where's its strings? It looks like it was alive!

TILDA

I told you it was the perfect puppet!

HERALD (*incredulously*)

Can I poke it?

TILDA (*sobbing under her breath*)

Yes, yes!

HERALD (*pokes. The puppet stares immovably before it. The* HERALD *retreats*)

Where do you hold it?

TILDA

I tell you it is the world's most marvellous puppet. It works by itself. (*To the puppet.*) Walk! (HANS *walks.*) Bow! (*He bows stiffly.*) Kneel!

[*The puppet kneels.*

HERALD

What are you crying about?

TILDA

I weep at its perfection.

HERALD (*approaching* HANS)

Hop! (*He hops*) Skip! (*He skips*) . . . Can it do the splits? (TILDA *nods. Solemnly* HANS *does the splits. The* HERALD, *grandly*) Follow me out of the door!

[*He goes,* HANS *following.*

TILDA (*suddenly*)

Wait, wait!

HERALD

What's the matter?

TILDA

A joint I forgot to fasten!

HERALD

Go ahead, but be quick about it.

TILDA

You must leave me alone. It is a secret of our trade.
[*The* HERALD *hesitates.*

HERALD

You won't do nothing to hurt it?

TILDA

I promise!
[*The* HERALD *goes out and closes the door.* TILDA *and* HANS *fall on each other's necks.*

TILDA (*sobbing*)

Father, Father, I shall miss you so!

HANS

You will marry Gustav the grocer's clerk, who always smiles across his cabbages!

TILDA

Father, they will put you in the Museum. It will be hot—stuffy!

HANS

Perhaps I can slip away to see you now and then.

TILDA

It will never be the same. They will look at you, handle you.

HANS (*with forced gaiety*)

And admire me! How they will praise the shop! They will say it closed when it could not better its final masterpiece.

TILDA

You will die of loneliness!

HANS (*wistfully*)

You will come to see me sometimes on Sunday afternoons?

TILDA

Every—every Sunday!
[*The* HERALD *knocks.*

HANS

Quick!
[*He gradually becomes rigid, taking on the fixed yet human expression which is to make the Bulow puppet the wonder of a century. The door opens.*

HERALD

Well? Well? Well?

TILDA

The puppet is ready.

HERALD (*to the puppet*)

March!

[*He goes tootling up the street, the puppet marching behind him. They are seen to cross the window at the back. As they pass out of sight* TILDA *drops on the bench sobbing as the curtain falls.*

IMMERSION[1]

BY

MAUDE HUMPHREY

[1] The incident around which this play is woven is a bit of family history. My grandfather was the boy, Abel, who "swung clear" under such circumstances as I have shown: later he became the Pa of the story, travelling about the country preaching the gospel of Salvation through Immersion and fighting all who disbelieved it as heartily as he fought atheism. He was of that fervent pioneer-preacher stock who demanded strict obedience to every letter of the Bible-law as they interpreted it. In another part of the country he would have shouted down Presbyterians or Episcopalians as lustily; in our particular district the Methodists were strong, and against them and their infant baptism the wrath of every Baptist was aimed.

If these characters seem too "highly colored" it is because they stand against such a dull gray background; only at "meetin'" was the starved monotony of their lives given adequate emotional outlet—but once loosened it swept them almost to fanaticism. If one knows the power of these preachers, it is not difficult to see how, under their leadership, a neighborhood could be organized into two such warring factions as existed here.

I have taken one liberty with facts: the debate and the baptism did not usually occur at the same meeting.

[1] NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

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CHARACTERS

PA
JENNY
ABEL
ELLA

First produced April 14, 15, and 16, 1926, by the Department of Drama, Yale University.

IMMERSION

The action takes place in the main room of a small frame house in a middle-west village, about 1850. The door at Center back is the main entrance to the house; the small-paned windows are partly covered with frost. The room is a dull ugly one, with dark-brown figured wallpaper, a rag carpet and a marble-topped table. There is an oval walnut-framed family portrait in India ink, a what-not with bric-a-brac, an oil lamp with a strip of red flannel in the bowl, a flower-wreath made, laboriously, from the hair of departed relatives, and a framed family record. There are tidies on all the chairs and a gay lambrequin around the shelf which holds the big clock with the painted scene on its face. In one corner is a child's walnut cradle with a bright quilt. Everything in the room is shabby and the furniture is very old. At one side is the stove, a medium-sized round one, opening at the top. It is glowing as the curtain rises about nine o'clock on a winter's evening.

PA *is sitting, propped up in his chair by the stove, holding on his knees the big Bible with its metal clasps. He is a thin, pale, white-haired old man of seventy, almost helpless from rheumatism. One foot huge with bandages, rests on a chair in front of him and his body is wrapped in a dingy blanket. His voice, weak from illness, shows, at times of excitement, the commanding vibrant quality of the pioneer back-woods preacher. His gleaming eyes are sharp and fearless.*

His daughter JENNY *stands looking out of the window, through which the moonlight is shining softly. She is a plain dark, serious young woman of twenty-five, in a tight worsted basque and a full flounced skirt; her plaited hair is wound about her head and a cascade of curls falls over one shoulder.*

As the curtain rises there is a faint sound of organ music and voices singing a hymn in the distance. PA *looks up from the Bible and turns toward* JENNY.

PA

Can you see the lights of the church, daughter?

JENNY

Yes, Pa. They look purty, shinin' on the snow.

PA

Are teams still going by, to the meeting?

JENNY (*looking out again and nodding*)

They've been passin' all evening. Church is packed by now—Methodists on one side, Baptists on t'other, with a good broad aisle between 'em. I hope our side's full.

PA

Open the door, Jenny, so I can hear the singing. I'd like to hear the "Blood of the Lamb."

JENNY (*shaking her head*)

It's that cold you'd be froze stiff in ten minutes.

PA (*looking toward the clock*)

They'll soon be getting to their baby-sprinkling!

(*With feeling.*) To think a son of mine would let his wife lead him into such unholy ways!

JENNY

Not yet, Pa. This is *special* meetin', you know, both crowds together. It'll last maybe all night, with hymns an' exhortin' an' prayin', besides the debate. An' when those preachers get to debatin' *on baptism*, there ain't no stoppin' 'em.

[*The music dies away and* JENNY *crosses to the table and takes up her knitting.*

PA

I'll wager the Baptist brother can set the place on fire while the other fellow's striking his match. I never heard tell of this Methodist debater. What's his name, Jenny?

JENNY

I disremember his name, but he hails from Kentucky. They say he's that learned he confounds folks with his Greek.

PA (*sharply*)

Leads them astray, you mean. I know all the things he'll say about infant baptism, and the rest. Many's the time *I've* answered 'em. Lies!

JENNY

Well, the Baptist brother can answer him, all right. He can say it in Hebrew.

PA

May the Lord give him strength and knowledge of the Word. We need a shaking among the dry bones.

JENNY

The Methodists had a grand meetin' last week. Jessie Higgins got conviction! Tore off her rings an' her muff an' come to the altar to shake hands with Christ!

PA

She'll not find Christ at a Methodist altar! (*Sighing.*) If the Lord would only give me strength to go! I'd put *fire* into the message!—But, it's four months since I could get out to meeting.

JENNY

Maybe it's best you couldn't go tonight, Pa. You'd feel mighty bad, seein' Abel on the Methodist side.

PA (*bitterly*)

To think I'd live to see it! Fifty years I've fought in the Baptist ranks—thundering against those damnable baby-sprinklers and their false baptism—and now my own son lets his wife take him over to the Methodist side! And they're having my grandchild sprinkled!

JENNY

But it ain't as if Abel was *really* a *Methodist.*

PA (*fiercely*)

No, he aint anything—a wild reckless boy, jeering at everything sacred. How I've prayed God to whip the devil out of him! (*Reminiscently.*) We've been Baptist preachers in our family for eighty-odd year; my grandpap was the best exhorter in the settlements, and my pa they used to call a Son of Thunder—and me (*proudly*), I was Commander of the Lord's Navy.

Now, He's stricken me with rheumatism, and it looks like I'm about done.

JENNY (*tenderly*)

You'll be better when the spring comes. God needs you here.

PA

If I could only live to see Abel take up the Cross in my place!

JENNY

Abel ain't even a believer.

PA (*emphatically*)

It's his Methodist wife's led him into wicked ways.

JENNY

I can't see he's any worse since he married Ella. He only goes to church with her when he has to.

PA

In my day, wives didn't dictate to their husbands about such things. They let the men folk decide.

JENNY

I can't blame Ella, wantin' the baby sprinkled; she believes that's goin' to save his soul.

PA

Damn his soul, you mean! What does she know about it—a Methodist? Lem Sawyer put his woman away for doing less than that—But Abel, he don't care—always out with Ben Higgins and that tough gang, cursing, drinking, playing cards.

JENNY (*acquiescing*)

Aye, Ben's deep in sin. You know what he says to me t'other day? He says, "Sam Reeder's laid up, cause he j'ined up with the Baptists, an' when he was ducked he swallered so much water he's got a floatin' kidney!"

PA

That's a dirty lie! No God-fearing Baptist would say such things.—But Ben's folks are Methodists. To think of Abel taking up with that crowd!

JENNY

Abel don't mean nothin' by his evil ways. He ain't awake—that's all's the matter with him.

PA (*fervently*)

Oh, that God would wake him!

JENNY

Remember what Ma used to say about him? She claimed she could look ahead and see him, goin' down into the water—leadin' others down, too, hundreds of others—cause he'd got the Call!

PA

The Call?—Abel?—Well, there's nothing God can't do!

[*Music is heard again in the distance. The hymn is "Just as I Am, Without One Plea."*

PA

Listen.

JENNY (*indicating by her nod that the music tells her what is happening in the church*)

They've got to the sprinkling.

PA

They're going forward now—with my grandchild—carrying him to a Methodist altar! They're flicking unholy water on his head—and repeating their Popish rigamarole! May God strike them with the thunder of His wrath!

[*He sinks back weakly.*

JENNY

Don't take on so, Pa. (*She gets up, evidently wishing to comfort and soothe* PA *some way; she notices his pipe on the shelf.*) I'll get you your pipe. (*She goes to the shelf and fills the pipe from a jar of tobacco, as she talks.*) I hear Jim Dunlop's resigned from the school board 'cause they hired a Baptist teacher.

PA

'Fraid she'll teach A B C's that ain't Methodist, eh?

[JENNY *brings him the pipe and lights it for him. He tries to help but sinks back groaning with pain.*

JENNY (*anxiously*)

Are you feelin' worse again?

PA

The pain's mortal bad.

JENNY

Why should God afflict you like this, after all you've done for Him?

PA (*gently*)

It's not for us to question the ways of the Almighty. [*They are silent for a moment. Then suddenly there are steps heard outside, and the muffled squeaking of of an opened gate.*

JENNY (*with a start*)

What's that? (*She gets up and goes to the window, holding the curtains aside to look out, then turns to* PA, *her face full of surprise.*) It's Abel, Pa—runnin' through the snow—without his coat, too—not so much as a muffler round him. He's carryin' somethin' —looks like—

[PA *leans forward in his chair, looking toward the door, as* JENNY *is interrupted by the door which is flung violently open, when* ABEL *with his baby in his arms rushes in. He is a plain country boy of nineteen; his homespun clothes and ill-fitting boots are stained with prairie mud; he is breathless and the snow clings to him. His hair is in disorder and his eyes have a strained look, anxious, searching, terrified. He slams the door and stands against it, awkwardly clutching the baby to him and breathing heavily.*

JENNY

Abel!—the meetin' ain't over a'ready? (*He does not answer.*) Where's Ella?

ABEL (*in a dazed tone*)

I—dunno. She'll be comin' along, I guess.

JENNY

Is the baby sick? Ella'd oughtn't to let you bring him out like that, through the snow.

ABEL

I had to, Jenny. I hadda get him away from there.

JENNY (*taking the baby*)

Why? What happened?

ABEL

The preacher said things at that meetin'—things that burned. I can hear 'em now—"wrath to come—black despair—sin that God won't forgive."

PA

That's strange talk from you, Abel.

ABEL

I guess I'm actin' strange.—But my baby's gotta be saved.

JENNY (*by the cradle, mothering the baby*)

Ain't he been sprinkled, like Ella wanted?

ABEL

No, I wouldn't. Not till I'm sure.

PA

Amen! At last God has opened your eyes to His truth!

ABEL (*sinking into a chair and sitting in deep thought*)

I gotta know what's right.

PA

Tell me about the meeting.

ABEL (*abstractedly and reluctantly*)

It was all right, I guess.

JENNY

Did you sit with Ella's folks?

ABEL (*nodding*)

On the Methodist side.

PA

May God forgive you for that sin.

JENNY

Was Jessie Higgins there again?

ABEL

Yes. And she brought Ben with her.

JENNY

Perhaps it'll do him some good.

ABEL

Huh. The old hypocrite, settin' there lookin' so pious in his biled shirt. An' last night he was down at Joe's place with me, playin' cards an' drinkin'.

PA

Sons of dissipation, both of you!

JENNY

There was a big crowd, wasn't there?

ABEL

Whole town was there, every stinkin' little psalm-singer in the place, an' all of 'em so damn serious about their baptisin', it was funny. They come in an' took their places as solemn as owls, Methodists on one side, Baptists on t'other—each one hopin' the other side was on the road to Hell.

PA

May your blasphemous tongue cleave to your mouth!

JENNY

How was the preachin'?

ABEL

Oh, those debaters, they had a lot of arguments, some of 'em I couldn't make head or tail of. They disputed what was the root of the word for baptise—an' did the apostles speak high-class Greek an' how big was the Pool of Bethesda. One of 'em told about a lady was sprinkled an' the drops of water burned her head so's it was scarred—'an she had no peace till she got immersed, an' then the water washed away the scars an' she got salvation.

PA

AMEN.

ABEL

The other fellow said as how Baptists are that dirty, even with their goin' clean under they'd never get washed white enough to meet God. It was funny, each of 'em fightin' like Hell for his own way of baptisin'.

PA

And God gave victory to the Baptist.

ABEL

I don't know. First I heard the Methodist and I thought he was right, and then I heard the Baptist and I thought he was right. I got all mixed up, 'cause one says my baby, there, can't be saved without he believes and is immersed—

PA (*interrupting*)

AMEN.

ABEL

And t'other says he'll be lost if he ain't sprinkled. Then they got to exhortin' and prayin'. Joe Ellis got down on his knees right there where everybody could see him an' talked about his sins—an' Lem Sawyer was jumpin' up an' down, yellin' "Come on Brother, let's go to Heaven by the water route!" All the time I was studyin' what should I do to save my baby. An' then that Methodist preacher started again, about a terrible God on a blazin' throne, an' a pit bigger'n the earth, full o' red-hot brimstone! an' my baby burnin'! Oh, God, I could see his little pink hands reachin' out of the pit—an' his little fuzzy head all black—I could hear him cryin' to me, to save him!

PA

May God's wrath descend on the Methodist liar! Didn't the Baptist brother answer him?

ABEL

He said babies don't need any baptism in order to be saved. An' then the Methodist commenced again, "You're shaking your child over Hell, Brother. Don't trifle with the temperature down there."

PA

That's wicked false doctrine! Take your religion straight from the Bible, my son. Follow Jesus into the water and wash away your sins.

ABEL

I don't care about myself. It's for him. I was nigh crazy tryin' to decide what to do about him. Then the preacher called on us to bring him up for baptism.

PA

Sprinkling, you mean.

ABEL

Ella, she got right up and started, carryin' the baby, an' I followed along, thinkin', "I'll go ahead an' let him be sprinkled, like the Methodist wants, an' then when he's old enough he can be dipped, like the Baptist wants; then he'll be safe both ways."

PA

You can't cheat God, like that. You've got to be on one side or the other.

ABEL

Everybody was lookin' at us, Baptists an' Methodists too; the place was quiet as the grave, even the prayin' stopped, an' the Methodist preacher said, "Will you bring him up in the fear of the Lord?" I tried to answer but I couldn't. Ella said, "Yes." All the time I was thinkin', it don't seem right that God would save my baby just if he's sprinkled and damn him if he ain't. What about all the babies whose folks don't know about sprinklin'? Then the preacher said, "Suffer little children to come unto me"—an' the music commenced, softlike, an' he took my baby, an' everybody started to sing, an' it seemed like God was right there with us. Then that preacher, he dipped his fin-

gers in the water an' says, "Another soul saved from eternal Hell-fire!"—that's what he says! Somethin' inside made me strike out, an' 'fore I knew what I was doin' I stood up an' says, "You lie! God ain't that mean!" An' I grabbed my baby an' run out of the place, leavin' the cussed preacher still hollerin'. I can hear him now, poundin' an' ravin'. He wants my baby for his God—or his Hell—but he can't have him!

PA

God be praised! We've struck fire at last!

[*There are steps outside and the door opens suddenly to admit* ELLA. *She is a rather pretty blonde, with thin lips and a determined expression. When her modish shawl and bonnet are removed, she is seen to be wearing a basque and skirt like* JENNY'S *and her hair is dressed the same way. A cheap ring with "sets" and a dangle bracelet indicate that she, at least, has not yet had the "Methodist jerks" and discarded her jewelry. She looks anxiously about the room, then she calls from the door to someone at the gate.*

ELLA

He's here all right, Jim. You needn't wait. (*She closes the door and turns to* ABEL, *the sharpness of her tone shows wounded pride and outraged motherhood.*) So, you come home, did you, Abel?—Where's the baby?

JENNY

Here, Ella, sound asleep in his cradle.

ELLA (*going to the baby*)

Thank God, he's safe!

JENNY

You never thought Abel would harm him, did you?

ELLA

I didn't know what he might do, he was actin' that crazy, carryin' on before all those folks—and me left there alone tryin' to explain, an' wonderin' would he maybe go an' kill the baby, like poor Jess Wilson did!

ABEL

I only wanted him to be safe.

ELLA

Well, you got a great way o' showin' it! I took him to church an' carried him to the altar, an' give him to the preacher—an' then you snatched him away, right out o' God's hands!

ABEL

I was tryin' to do what's right for him. God knows I ain't been much of a man—I done lots o' dirty wicked things, but I'm gonna do right by him.

ELLA

Then whyn't you let him be sprinkled? You was listenin' when the preacher was talkin' about Hell, wasn't you? Minnie Ellis, sittin' in front o' me, when she heard what he said, she couldn't get her baby to the altar fast enough. But you—you'd send him down among the thieves an' murderers an' blasphemers!

PA

That's the devil's doctrine!

ELLA

Whether you believe it or not, hell's full o' babies whose fathers have sent 'em there—

PA

Lies!

ELLA

The things my mother told me wasn't lies! She said everybody that dies unbaptised goes to Hell!

PA

Not babies. They die in the first Adam but the second Adam died for them and they shall live in Him.

ELLA

That ain't what our preacher says. Oh, I can't bear to think of my darling baby—
[*She drops her head into her hands, and sinks down by the cradle.*

PA

"He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."

ABEL

How can a baby believe?

ELLA

How's he gonna be saved if he ain't sprinkled? God don't want babies left out o' Heaven.

PA

Those born of the flesh shall not inherit nor associate with those born of the spirit. The old things have

passed away, Ella. Christ's church is for those who, through baptism, make known their new hearts.

ABEL

Yes, Pa, but what kind o' baptism?

PA

There is only one kind.

ABEL

That's what Bill Turner said, to-night. He was settin' there an' the Baptist fellow jumped on him an' says, "Brother, if you ain't been immersed you're a lost soul." An' he asked God to show him the light. Say, that made Bill mad. He 'lows as how he don't want none of their Baptist mercy—

ELLA (*interrupting*)

He had plenty of Methodist mercy sprinkled on him when he was a baby.

ABEL

The preachers began fightin' over him till I thought he'd lose his shirt, between 'em.
[*He begins to laugh, a little hysterically.*

ELLA

What's come over you, Abel? Have you been drinkin?

PA

Let him alone, Ella. He's heard the voice of God.

ABEL

No, I only heard the preachers.

ELLA

You didn't hear all they said—or else you don't care what you've done to our baby. If you had any faith—

ABEL

I ain't. I just got questions.

PA (*handing him the Bible*)

Here's an answer to all your questions, my son.

ABEL (*taking it reluctantly*)

Both them preachers was readin' from this book.

PA

I'll wager the Methodist didn't read from the first chapter of St. Mark.

ELLA

The Baptist didn't say anything about "Suffer little children to come unto me." There's nothin' there (*Pointing to the Bible.*) that says folks were immersed in those days.

PA

It says Jesus went down into the water.

ABEL (*turning awkwardly through the Bible*)

And John baptised at—some place or other—because there was lots of water there: he musta wanted the water to immerse folks.

ELLA (*contemptuously*)

They needed it to water their camels. Tell me how the jailor and his family could have been immersed there in prison? And Saul in his house, too sick to walk to the river?

PA

The word itself means immersing. If you'd read it in the Greek—

ABEL (*interrupting*)

Them preachers quoted foreign words all evening. They immersed us in Greek an' sprinkled us with Latin—but they didn't learn me much.

PA

You only need to know this, my son. "We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

ELLA

And that's sprinkling! It always has been, ever since the church began. The saints believed it. Who are you (*Turning to* ABEL.) to say it's wrong? Do you know better'n the bishops and the martyrs?

ABEL (*thoughtfully*)

No—but I'm wonderin' if maybe there ain't somethin' more'n just Methodist and Baptist in this thing? Somethin' bigger'n just sprinklin' an' dippin'?

PA

There's nothing bigger than immersion. Oh, my son, God's trying to show you the way into His church. If you enter through repentance and baptism, you shall have, not (*Turning to* ELLA.) a sprinkling of grace, but a complete covering, an overwhelming with God's mercy. "For we are buried with Him in baptism," and immersion doth now save us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

ELLA (*with determination*)

You can be immersed if you want to—but you needn't take away *his* chance at salvation! He's my baby too, and I want him sprinkled!

JENNY

He might catch his death from puttin' cold water on his head.

ELLA

Then he'd go straight to Heaven, but now—'sposen he'd die, tonight, in one o' his spells o' croup!
[*She bursts into sobs and sinks onto her knees by the cradle.*

PA

Oh, ye of little faith! Babies dying need neither faith, repentance nor baptism in order to be saved.

ABEL

"Water, water, follow your Saviour into the water." That's what they said. But how do I know—

PA

Listen. "And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised of John in Jordan. And straightway, *coming up out of the water*—He saw the Heavens opened and the spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from Heaven saying, "Thou art my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."

ABEL

But—that was Jesus.

PA

The same baptism is for us—we have His promise.

ABEL

But Pa, how? Not the dove and everything?

PA

Every soul that rises from the water, immersed and purified, may see the dove and hear God's "Well done."

ABEL

But nobody ever did.

PA

Three thousand people did, once. They heard a rushing mighty wind, they saw cloven tongues as of fire; there were wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire and vapour of smoke. And whosoever called upon the name of the Lord was saved!

ABEL (*has listened to these words as if he had never heard them before. In* PA'S *slow impressive tones the words take on a new meaning to him and he is deeply moved.*)

Are you *sure?* Oh, I wanta believe!

PA (*sitting forward in his chair, his shaking hand upraised*)

Ask Him! for a sign! Ask Him! Pray, pray, for a sign!

[*He sinks back in his chair and closes his eyes.*

ABEL (*after hesitating for a second, gets on his knees awkwardly*)

Will you, too, Ella? We both wanta know?

[ELLA, *from her place by the cradle, goes quietly on her knees, covering her face with her hands.* JENNY *stops her knitting and prays silently in her chair.*

ABEL (*in a low trembling voice*)

Oh God— Oh Lord— Oh God—show me the path. Speak to me, won't you? Like you did to Saint Paul? Let me know which way's right. Oh Lord, make it *plain!* Say it *loud*, Oh Lord!

[*He stops and the silence in the room is intense. After a few seconds he raises his head and looks about, dazed and wondering.* ELLA *lifts her head and* JENNY'S *eyes follow* ABEL, *anxious, loving, fearful.*

ABEL (*as if to himself*)

I guess He ain't used to my voice. I mighta known—the preachers don't talk to God like that. (*He bows his head again and prays, at first using the new words with difficulty.*) Great God, maker of Heaven and earth—I bow before Thy awful Majesty. Thou art just and terrible—humbly beseech Thee to hear. Oh God, I stand between Heaven and Hell—doubts and fears—I am blinded and cannot tell which is Heaven or Hell—standing on the brink— Oh Lord, touch me! Turn me in the right way! Strike me with Thy burning sword! Oh, God give me a sign! a sign! Send light, shining—fire, burning—wind, rushing—even the still small voice, whispering!—Something, anything, Oh Lord, *anything!* (*Sinking back, he is quiet for a second, then raising his head he looks*

around expectantly, his expression radiant, almost triumphant, and he waits, while ELLA *and* JENNY *watch him, tense and wondering. There is absolute silence and nothing is changed. His voice is disappointed.*) I guess God didn't hear me. (*After a second his expression changes again to an expectant one.*) Maybe the moon's changed, or the snow's black, or something? (*He gets up and goes over to the window looking out eagerly. But things are unchanged; disappointment, confusion, grief replace the look of triumph on his face; his voice is full of despair.*) God didn't hear me—but I ain't surprised. Why should He? (*He goes to the baby's cradle, and his face is agonized and pitiful as he strokes the coverlet with trembling fingers.*) Poor little thing! Maybe you *are* damned! Oh God!

[*He sinks down by the cradle, sobbing wildly.* JENNY *has risen and starts toward him, when she notices* PA *who is sunk down, motionless, in his chair.*)

JENNY (*in a low tone*)

Pa. (*After a second, in a louder tone.*) Pa. (*He does not answer and she leans down to look into his face; a look of terror comes into her eyes. She picks up* PA'S *hand and its coldness makes her shudder. She touches his face which is very pale, and puts her hand on his heart which is still; she starts back, awe and pain overcoming her, and her voice is frantic.*) Abel!

[ABEL *rises at her tone and comes forward, but* JENNY'S *face tells him before her trembling lips can form the words, that* PA *is dead.* ABEL *looks at her, frightened, speechless, overcome.*

ABEL (*in an awed whisper*)

What'll I do? Go for Doc White?

JENNY (*brokenly*)

It's—too late.

ABEL (*sinking down by* PA'S *side*)

No—it can't be.

[*As he chafes the cold hand he knows there is no need for a doctor.*

ABEL (*in an agonized whisper*)

I've killed him!

JENNY (*tenderly*)

Pa said he'd be glad to go—if it would bring you into the fold, Abel. (*She puts her arms around him and they cling to each other in their grief.* JENNY *is the first to realize how unmistakably God has been present in the room and her face is filled with a solemn sort of joy, mingled with tears, as she comforts the boy.*) You asked for a sign, and God came right down into this room to give it to you! (*Pause.* ABEL *looks at* JENNY, *light beginning to dawn on him.*) Seems to me He's tellin' you, plain, that Pa knew. (*Pause.*) Can't you hear Him?

ABEL (*with broken voice, as he bows his head at* PA'S *knee*)

Yes, Lord, I can hear.

CURTAIN

YELLA

A Melodrama

BY

HARRY McGUIRE

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CHARACTERS

DIRKS—a seaman
MIKE—a seaman
CHINESE WOMAN
CHINESE MAN

First produced April 14, 15, and 16, 1926 by the Department of Drama, Yale University.

YELLA

Scene: The forecastle of an American tramp steamer decked at Shanghai. The forecastle is shaped like an inverted W; the back wall forms a right angle, the point of the angle jutting out almost to the centre of the stage. Against each of these two short walls forming the angle is backed a double-decked bunk. The bunks are very unkempt. On ropes strung from one end of a bunk to the other dirty shirts, trousers, towels, etc., are hung. Shoes, suitcases, sea boots, socks are cluttered around the floor by the bunks. Down stage, a little right of centre, is a long mess table flanked on the up-stage side by a bench. A plain chair at the right end of the table and another in the left corner, up-stage. There is an opening in the wall left, thru which the companionway can be seen. Along both walls clothes of many kinds are hanging; coats, sweaters, dungharees, slickers, sou'westers, etc. In the right wall, above the pegs holding the clothes, are three closed portholes. Everything is in confusion. The mess table is littered with magazines, playing-cards, glasses, an empty whiskey bottle or two. Cigarette butts are scattered on the floor. A few pictures of scantily-clad girls, evidently cut from magazines, are pasted to the walls.

There are two electric lights in the forecastle, but only one, which is hung up-stage alongside the left bunk, is burning. The bulb shows streaks of red paint on it, and gives off a dull, slightly red light. It does not il-

luminate the right up-stage corner of the forecastle; this corner is in deep shadow.

The rise of the curtain discloses a forecastle, dark, disheveled; quiet like a drunken man sleeping off his stupor; yet strangely sinister and alive, ominous as an uncouth giant who may wake at any moment and do hideous things. For a moment there is no movement on the stage, then a small figure stirs noiselessly in the shadows, pauses to listen for any sound from the companionway, glides to the bunk Right, and searches stealthily. It is a middle-aged CHINESE WOMAN, *very tiny, dressed in a dirty tunic that falls below her knees. She wears cloth shoes, and moves with noiseless precision. Finally she finds a small box, fiddles with the panels that open it, utters a low cry and holds up a small round object. Immediately voices are heard in the companionway: the unrefined guttural voices of men who have successfully resisted all but the most elemental influences of civilization.*

VOICE OF DIRKS (*laughing boisterously*)

—Oh-ho-ho. Gawd! Gawd! *Did* yuh pipe the look the Bo'sun give me? Gawd!

VOICE OF MIKE

He was sore.

CHINESE WOMAN (*in a low voice, speaking as though to an invisible presence*)

Ni bu-uo mei wo.

[*The* WOMAN *swiftly puts the box back, and glides to the wall Right, where she conceals herself behind some of the clothes that are hung in the shadows.*

Two seamen enter. DIRKS, *who is larger and more domineering than his companion, is particularly uncouth in appearance. They are both dressed in the shabby shore clothes of seamen of the lowest class: caps, dirty trousers, shirts without ties.* MIKE *wears a buttoned sweater and* DIRKS *a blue jersey sweater.*

DIRKS

Gawd! What a officer!

[*Sits down at the right end of the table.*

MIKE

He thought we was drunk. Looked funny at us when we come up the plank. It'd be like him t' turn us to right away.

[*Sits on left end of mess table.*

DIRKS

He can't.

MIKE

Why can't he?

DIRKS

We're in port.

MIKE

Wot difference does that make?

DIRKS

There's a law . . . or sumpun.

MIKE

I never heard of it.

DIRKS

You never heard o' nothin', Mike, till I tells it to yuh. You was the ignorantest beachcomber in Manila till I takes yuh up an' shows yuh a few things.

MIKE (*in a low voice*)

Like . . . where t' put a knife in a man's back?

[DIRKS' *reply is smothered by a loud Irish voice from the top of the companionway.*

VOICE OF BO'SUN

Hey, down there! Wake up! Hey, you spalpeens!

[MIKE *goes to the bottom of the companionway.*

MIKE

Wot'll yuh have, Loughlin?

VOICE OF BO'SUN

Who's down there?

MIKE

Dirks an' me.

VOICE OF BO'SUN

That all?

MIKE

Yeh. Rest're ashore.

VOICE OF BO'SUN

Well, sober up, see? An' when you're fit to be seen on a ship's deck get up for'ard an' paint them rat guards.

MIKE

Jus' . . . me?

VOICE OF BO'SUN

Yeh, jus' you, yuh rum tank.

MIKE (*sullenly, turning from the companionway*)

Awright, Bo'sun.

DIRKS (*who has been stifling his laughter*)

Oh, ho-ho. So *you've* gotta paint rat-guards! Ho-ho.

MIKE

I thought yuh said there was a law agen workin' in port?

DIRKS

There is, seaman . . . for them as makes laws . . . people like me.

MIKE

Go on, wot laws you ever make?

DIRKS

Laws for everythin' I do. You jus' watch me, seaman. I don't do nothin' I don't want to. An' I make the other fellow do wot I want him t' do, or I break him—(*He snaps a cigarette in half.*)—like that.

MIKE (*impressed*)

Is that w'y Loughlin didn't tell you t' work too?

DIRKS

Sure. He's afraid o' me, m' little friend.

[DIRKS *rises and throws open a porthole in the right wall. A shaft of light streams in. Faintly, in monotonous ryhthm, the chanties of the Chinese dock-coolies can be heard—"Hoy-hoy—hee-hee—hoy-hay—," discordant, unmelodious, flat-toned, weaving the web of*

dispassionate effort that is the background of Oriental life.

DIRKS

Look here, Mike. (MIKE *comes and looks out.*) *See* them goo-goos sweatin' like pigs?

MIKE

They're jus' coolies.

DIRKS

That's it. They're jus' doin' wot they're told. *They* don't make no laws.

MIKE

I suppose not.

DIRKS

It's men like me wot runs things. Them goo-goos ain't good for nothin' but givin' me wot I want—an' w'en I wanta take it.

MIKE

But . . . I know one thing, Dirks. They bleed . . . w'en yuh knife 'em.

DIRKS

So do pigs.

[DIRKS *closes the porthole, resumes his seat at the table with the air of a man who has said something profound. He is discovering his philosophy—though he never heard of Nietzche—with growing pride.*

DIRKS

Yuh see, Mike, I got the whole world buffaloed.

MIKE (*sitting on the left end of the table*)

Wisht I knew how yuh did it.

DIRKS

Well, I'm learnin' yuh, ain't it?

MIKE (*leaning close to* DIRKS)

Yuh mean—las' night, Dirks?

DIRKS

I mean—las' night.

MIKE

Well . . . swipin' pearls ain't learnin' much how t' get outa work.

[MIKE *takes a bottle from his pocket and pours himself a drink of whiskey.*

MIKE

Neither's climbin' around the roof of a joss-house.

DIRKS (*sarcastically*)

Too bad, ain't it!

MIKE

Not for you it ain't, Admiral. . . . But don't forget that while you was standin' outside lookin' wise, it was me who was inside the temple gettin' the sea-egg.

DIRKS

That was your job.

MIKE

Sure, but I didn't sign no contract t' knife a goo-goo.

DIRKS

He'd of got you if yuh hadn't.

MIKE

I know, but it wasn't pleasant. Bled too damned much, an' the idol lookin' white as a bloody ghost all the while I stowed the body away.

DIRKS

Dead things is always white, Mike.

[*There is a slight noise as of finger-nails scraping against wood, from the clothes behind which the* CHINESE WOMAN *hides.*

MIKE

Dirks . . . wot's that?

DIRKS

Wot?

MIKE

A noise.

DIRKS

I didn't hear nothin'. (*Pours himself a glass of whiskey.*) You're still drunk.

MIKE (*nervously*)

I'd swear I heard somethin'.

DIRKS

Say listen, seaman . . . are you goin' t' grow into a man or am I goin' t' hafta drop yuh?

MIKE

I can't help it. That big white idol in the joss-house

keeps creepin' into my mind . . . him with his pearl gone. (*Pours another drink.*) An' then the way that goo-goo bled! An' his yella face was white w'en I rolled him over. White, mind yuh . . . the kind of white that sticks in your nut . . . an' follows yuh . . .

DIRKS

Drop that line, seaman! Hear me?

MIKE (*taking a gulp of whiskey from the bottle*)

Awright. Guess I'll go an' paint rat guards. (*Starts to take off his shore clothes, preparatory to putting on his dungharees.*) The Chinks is a funny race, Dirks. They don't do nothin' but yuh can't seem t' get away from 'em.

DIRKS

Yuh can kill 'em.

[*Drinks, then buries his head in his arms on the table.*

MIKE (*going to the left wall, and taking dungharees from a hook*)

Yeh . . . but they don't die . . . somehow.

[*Unnoticed by* MIKE, *an old* CHINESE MAN, *who was concealed behind the many clothes hung on the wall, and who was partly revealed by* MIKE'S *removal of the dungharees, takes a step out into the room. He stands impassive, motionless. He is blind, and his unseeing eyes are fixed on a point higher than the ordinary level of men's eyes. His tattered shirt is open in front, revealing his dark, emaciated body. His ragged pants come barely below the knee. He is barefoot, and holds a boxful of trinkets in one hand. What*

little hair there is on his head is nearly white. He is the quintessence of the stolid impassivity of the Orient.

MIKE

Or maybe it is they ain't ever alive t' begin with.

CHINESE MAN (*in a low voice, holding out the boxful of trinkets*)

Sell.

[MIKE *jumps at the sound of the* OLD MAN'S *voice. When he sees the man he recoils to the edge of the bunk, staring speechlessly.*

MIKE (*slowly recovering his composure*)

Gawd . . . you scared me . . . you.

[*He advances and touches the* OLD MAN *gingerly, then turns to* DIRKS.

MIKE

Dirks!

[DIRKS *does not raise his head;* MIKE *continues to stare with awe, half frightened, half fascinated.*

MIKE

Dirks! See who's here.

DIRKS

See . . . hell.

MIKE

Come on . . . see who's here.

DIRKS

Who?

MIKE

C'fucius.

DIRKS

C'fucius, hell.

MIKE (*indicating the* OLD MAN)

Look up an' see.

DIRKS (*raising his head and looking blearily at the* OLD MAN.)

Well.

MIKE

That's wot I say.

DIRKS

You . . . you over there . . . wot're yuh doin' here?

MIKE

That's wot I say . . . wot you doin' here?

DIRKS

How'd you get in here? Well?

[*No reply from* CHINESE MAN.

MIKE

He must've come like a ghost, Dirks. I didn't even see him come in.

DIRKS

Get outa here, you dirty goo-goo!

MIKE (*going over to* CHINESE MAN)

Clear out!

CHINESE MAN (*holding out box of ivory trinkets*)

Sell. Sell.

MIKE

I guess he's a peddler, Dirks. Shall we kick him out?

DIRKS

Damn fast.

MIKE (*jerking* CHINESE MAN *by the arm*)

Get out!

CHINESE MAN

Sell. Sell.

[*Still staring straight ahead.*

MIKE (*examining the trinkets*)

Well, I'll see wot yuh have.

DIRKS

Kick him out, Mike. Must be a damn fool at the after plank t' let him on. Wish t' hell we was outa Shanghai.

[*Glances at* MIKE, *who is still fingering the trinkets.*

DIRKS

Toss me a souvenir, Mike.

MIKE

They're ivory.

DIRKS

That's all right.

MIKE

So was the idol—ivory.

DIRKS

Shut up! Toss me one.

[MIKE *throws a cigarette holder to* DIRKS.

MIKE (*to* CHINESE MAN)

Yuh don't get out so easy, see?

[MIKE *examines a couple of trinkets, then stuffs them in his pocket. The* CHINESE MAN *stares stolidly ahead.*

MIKE (*to* CHINESE MAN)

Wot'cha give the watch at the plank t' let yuh on?

[*No answer from the* CHINESE MAN.

MIKE

Goo-goo's blind, Dirks.

DIRKS

Blind, is he?

MIKE

See . . . (*Moving his hand in front of the man's face.*) . . . blind as a halyard's eye.

DIRKS (*pouring two big drinks of whiskey*)

Take some ivories.

MIKE (*to* CHINESE MAN)

I'm takin' some presents for the captain, you goo-goo, see?

[*Takes a handful of the trinkets and puts them on the table. They both drink and* DIRKS *fingers the trinkets.*

DIRKS

Don't like that Chink in here.

MIKE

I don't give a damn for Shanghai either—(*Laughs shortly.*)—after las' night.

DIRKS

Shut up! Yuh don't know how that Chink got in here.

MIKE

He don't savvy English.

DIRKS

Wot of it! I don't like him in here.

MIKE

Wot'll we do with him?

[DIRKS *drinks again.*

MIKE

I know. I'll feed him some gum.

[*Takes stick of gum from his pocket.*

DIRKS

Lay off that little girl stuff, d'ye hear? You got the habit worst than the hops. There's gum wads every place a man puts his hand in this forecastle. Lay off it, I tell yuh.

MIKE

All right, Admiral. (*From his mouth he takes the gum he has been chewing, sticks it under the down-stage edge of the mess-table with a gesture of exaggerated deference.*) You've got habits yourself, I've heard you tell.

DIRKS

Wot habits?

MIKE

Oh, croakin' people, an' such.

DIRKS (*quietly*)

Soft on that stuff, seaman. If I ever hear you sayin' . . .

MIKE

Not me, Admiral. Not after las' night.

[*They touch glasses and drink. As* DIRKS *lowers his glass, his eye falls on the blind* CHINESE MAN.

DIRKS (*glaring at the* CHINESE MAN)

Hey, you! Clear out!

[*The* CHINESE MAN *doesn't bat an eyelid.* DIRKS *rises angrily, seizes the* CHINESE MAN, *propels him roughly up the companionway with sundry kicks and pokes.*

CHINESE MAN

Sell. Sell.

DIRKS

You'll play hell tryin' t' sell anythin' down here.

CHINESE MAN (*from companionway*)

Ni bu-uo mai wo pa di, Li Wang.

DIRKS

Keep out now, get me? (*Returns to the table.*) I'd as leave slit his throat—the damned goo-goo!

MIKE (*who has been watching the proceedings with deep gravity*)

Yuh know, Dirks, I'm offa China.

DIRKS

Females too high-priced?

MIKE

No. It's just. . . . Well, it's too quiet.

DIRKS

Huh?

MIKE

On the surface, that is. Kinda quiet like a sea before the wind comes up.

DIRKS

I know wot yuh mean . . . forget it.

MIKE

I'll never touch China after we cash in on the pearl. I don't like people who don't show wot they're thinkin'.

DIRKS

Goo-goos don't think.

MIKE

No . . . not on the surface.

DIRKS

Nor any place.

MIKE

They're quiet.

DIRKS

Yeh. They're quiet.

MIKE

Too damned quiet.

DIRKS

Yeh.

MIKE

You're not quiet.

DIRKS

Well, wot of it?

MIKE

I was just wonderin'. . . .

DIRKS

Don't wonder, seaman . . . not till you're told to. I'm the wonderin' part o' this company, get me?

MIKE

You're the Admiral.

DIRKS

Jus' remember that.

MIKE (*pouring more whiskey*)

Let's drink to—to wot?

DIRKS

The idol.

MIKE

You're tryin' t' give me the creeps.

DIRKS (*raising glass*)

T' the ivory idol.

[*They drink.*

MIKE

You didn't see him, Dirks, or yuh wouldn't be drinkin' to him.

DIRKS

There's nothin' in heaven or hell I'm afraid of.

MIKE

You didn't see the face o' that goo-goo priest w'en I knifed him.

DIRKS

I'll drink t' his health in hell.
[*Starts to drink.*

MIKE (*holding* DIRKS'S *arm*)

Don't, Dirks! For Gawd's sake. Yuh make me think of it.

DIRKS

A little touchy on your first knifin', eh?

MIKE

If you'd seen his face w'en I got him. . . .

DIRKS

Wot was funny about it?

MIKE

So bloody—quiet.

DIRKS

Everythin' seems quiet t' you.

MIKE

Everythin' is quiet—in China.

DIRKS

Even dead priests, eh?

MIKE

There're things that're quieter even than dead priests.

DIRKS

Wotaya mean?

MIKE

Live things. . . . Oh! (*He almost screams as his eye suddenly meets the blind* CHINESE MAN, *who is in the same position as before, having returned slowly, stealthily, unseen, as* MIKE *and* DIRKS *were drinking.*) Dirks! Dirks! He's back. . . . Look at him!

DIRKS (*smiling loftily to hide his own chagrin*)

Kinda scared yuh, eh?

MIKE (*recovered from his fright*)

No. Hell, no. But I don't like him.

DIRKS

Kick him out! I'd like t' know how he got in here in the first place.

MIKE (*turning to* CHINESE MAN)

An' why, eh?

DIRKS

Why?

MIKE

That's it. (*With a half-shudder.*) Yuh never know the why o' things in China.

DIRKS (*rising suddenly*)

Wait!

[DIRKS *looks curiously at the* CHINESE MAN, *then goes to his bunk, Right. From an improvised cupboard he takes a small wooden box. By sliding two or three secret panels he opens the box. He stares in amazement.*

MIKE

Wot's wrong?

DIRKS

The pearl . . . it's gone!

MIKE

Rot! Can't be. (*Takes box from* DIRKS *and runs his hand through it.*) It is gone.

DIRKS

It was there w'en I left the ship today. Did you open that box before you came t' meet me?

MIKE

No.

DIRKS

If you're lyin' t' me, I'll . . .

MIKE

I'm not, Dirks. I'm not.

DIRKS (*suddenly*)

It's this goo-goo. (*Goes to* CHINESE MAN *and seizes*

him by the throat.) Where is it you, stinkin' pimp? Out with it!

CHINESE MAN

Sell! Sell! Ni bu-uo mei wo pa di, Li Wang.

DIRKS

Out with it.

[*Hits* CHINESE MAN *in the face.*

CHINESE MAN

Li Wang ni di tang uo t'ai t'oi uo t'sang.

DIRKS

Go through him, Mike.

[MIKE *quickly runs through the* CHINESE MAN'S *clothes, as* DIRKS *holds him.*

MIKE

He must've hid it.

DIRKS

I'll take your head off your neck, yuh blind . . .

[*Breaks off as he sees, out of the corner of his eye, a coat fall from its peg in the shadowy corner where the* CHINESE WOMAN *is hiding. He stands motionless a moment, his eyes searching the shadows to the Right. He motions* MIKE *to keep quiet.* DIRKS, after relaxing *and then releasing his grip on the* CHINESE MAN, *draws a knife. Stealthily he advances toward where the* CHINESE WOMAN *is concealed, his knife poised. With a cry, "There!" he springs forward and plunges his knife into the clothes. As he springs the Chinese woman leaps out, down stage, avoiding the knife. She runs around the down-stage side of the table and toward*

the door Left. MIKE *intercepts her, and throws her back against the mess table. She clutches the edge of the table, straining to hold up. They are on the downstage side of the mess table, near the door left.*

DIRKS (*coming up and seizing* WOMAN'S *arms*)

All right, you stinker, let's see wot you've got in your hands.

MIKE

Make her let go the table.

[*He bends her back cruelly. Her mouth gapes open in her effort to get air, her face is distorted with pain. Yet, unnoticed by the seamen, she has maneuvered her left hand past* MIKE *and clutched the edge of the table far to the left.*

DIRKS

Let go!

MIKE

Let go! Look in her hands, DIRKS.

[*With a jerk* DIRKS *loosens her right hand's grip on the table. It is empty.*

DIRKS

She's got it in that hand.

[MIKE *pulls her left hand loose. It too is empty.*

MIKE

No, it isn't.

[*He relaxes his hold and allows her to stand up.*

DIRKS

Where'd yuh put it?

MIKE

She's hid it.

DIRKS

Damn you, where is it?

[*No reply from the woman.*

DIRKS

The pearl . . . you know wot I mean . . . where is it?

CHINESE WOMAN (*in very broken English*)

Yes.

DIRKS

Yes—wot?

CHINESE WOMAN

Yes.

MIKE

Wot were you doin' in here?

DIRKS

Who is that man there?

[*Indicating the* CHINESE MAN, *who stands impassive as adamant.*

MIKE

Who is he?

CHINESE WOMAN

Him sell. Me sell. Him husband—father.

DIRKS

Husband?

CHINESE WOMAN

Yes.

DIRKS

Or father?

WOMAN

Yes.

DIRKS

Damn you! How'd you get on board?

WOMAN

Sell.

MIKE

Sell to who?

CHINESE WOMAN

Yes.

MIKE

She's hid it, Dirks.

DIRKS

Tell us wher' yuh put it, yuh stinkin' goo-goo, or I'll have t' . . .

CHINESE WOMAN

K'o-t'ou.

DIRKS

None o' your Chinese. Speak English.

MIKE

That means she'll do wot we say, Dirks. I've heard it before.

DIRKS

Will yuh tell us where it is?

CHINESE WOMAN

K'o-t'ou.

DIRKS (*Seizing her by the throat*)

If yuh don't tell me I'll kill yuh. Is that plain? I'll kill yuh! Understand? Kill—*Kill!*

CHINESE WOMAN

Yes.

DIRKS

Awright. Where is it?

CHINESE WOMAN

Yes.

DIRKS (*infuriated, throwing her back against the table*)

You'll tell now, won't yuh? Feel through her clothes, Mike.

[MIKE *does so quickly*

MIKE

It isn't on her.

DIRKS

Speak out, yuh yella slut! Where is it?

MIKE

Be careful, Dirks. We can't kill her. We wouldn't know where she'd hid the egg.

DIRKS

Damn slut! (*Pressing harder.*) She's tough.

MIKE

An' we'd have trouble stowin' the body away. Don't kill her.

DIRKS (*loosing his hold on her*)

We'll see wot she has t' say.

[*The* CHINESE WOMAN *straightens up slowly. Her face reveals pain, yet withal her attitude is one of nerveless impassivity. She stands motionless, saying nothing.*

DIRKS

Want more of it?

[*No answer.*

DIRKS

Or will yuh tell?

[*No answer. In a passion of anger* DIRKS *strikes the the woman. She retreats to the Right as he follows her, cuffing her on the head brutally, and cursing. When she has retreated far to the Right,* DIRKS *seizes her by the hair with one hand and with the other knocks her into the dark corner, Right, up stage. She lies there motionless.*

CHINESE MAN (*in a low thin voice. He is still immobile as a tree. His sightless eyes have not wavered once during the preceding action.*)

U guo in tsung, Li Wang. Wo di ai t'ching nu lik huai boy ni, Li Wang.

DIRKS (*pouring himself a drink*)

Is that so! Well, my ugly monkey, it's too bad yuh won't be able t' see wot I do to her w'en she comes to.

MIKE (*also drinking*)

It's all a bit creepy, Dirks.

DIRKS

You an' your damned creeps!

MIKE

I feel like somethin' was workin' against us.

DIRKS

Wot?

MIKE

Somethin' . . . quiet . . . somethin' underneath the surface.

DIRKS

I don't feel nothin'.

MIKE

As though somebody was laughin' at us all the time?

DIRKS (*glancing around the forecastle curiously*)

There's nobody here but us. (*A pause.*) An' you trust Dirks t'o bring everythin' out ship-shape. (*Confidently.*) Don't never forget that I'm the Admiral, an' in a pinch I've got a few extra brains up here in the storeroom (*tapping his forehead*) an' a good knife for yella goo-goos.

[*Indicating his knife, which lies on the table.*

MIKE

Yeh . . . but there's somethin' laughin' at us . . . I can almost hear it . . . maybe the blind goo-goo.

[*They both turn to peer at the imperturbable old man.*

DIRKS

No . . . He's not laughin'.

MIKE

No . . . not that yuh can see. Maybe it's the—idol.

DIRKS

See here, Mike, toss that stuff over the stern. You'll be givin' *me* the jimmies 'fore yuh know it.

MIKE

You didn't see that white idol.

DIRKS

I don't give a hoot in hell wot I didn't see, I tell you t' batten down your trap. You're talkin' like a steward's helper. We've no time for gettin' creeps. Loughlin might be comin' back t' see w'y you're not paintin' rat traps, pretty soon, an' I don't want him nosin' into our business.

MIKE

Maybe the drink's makin' me dizzy.

DIRKS

That's it, seaman, sure. Now brace up. (*Putting his arms around* MIKE'S *shoulders.*) Listen—while I'm waitin' for the goo-goo t' come to, you look around for the pearl . . . look where she's been. See?

MIKE

Yeh.

[MIKE *reels to the wall Right, searches through the clothes behind which the* CHINESE WOMAN *was hiding, and eventually gets down on his knees in his search.*

Meanwhile DIRKS *sits on the left end of the mess table, smoking a cigarette. The* CHINESE MAN *is back of him, a little to his right.*

MIKE

I can't see nothin'.

DIRKS

Jus' keep lookin!

CHINESE MAN (*after a moment of silence, speaking in a low voice*)

T'a.

[DIRKS *pays no attention to him. Continues to smoke.*

CHINESE MAN

T'a.

[DIRKS *pours a drink.*

CHINESE MAN

T'a.

[DIRKS, *with glass halfway to his mouth, stops short. He does not turn to look at the* CHINESE MAN, *but listens intently.*

CHINESE MAN

T'a.

[DIRKS *turns his head and stares at the* CHINESE MAN.

CHINESE MAN

T'a.

[DIRKS *puts the glass down, stealthily slides from the table, and goes to the side of the* CHINESE MAN. *He peers scrutinizingly into the man's stolid face.*

CHINESE MAN

T'a.

DIRKS (*in a low voice*)

Him?

CHINESE MAN (*indicating the direction of* MIKE *with a wide gesture*)

T'a.

DIRKS

Him—have pearl?

CHINESE MAN (*with gesture*)

T'a.

[DIRKS *looks over at* MIKE *suspiciously.* MIKE *is still desultorily rummaging around the clothes.*

CHINESE MAN (*with gesture*)

T'a.

[DIRKS *mouth twists to a portentous leer. He gives the* CHINESE MAN *a restraining touch on the mouth, and steals toward* MIKE.

MIKE (*without turning*)

I don't find nothin', Dirks.

[DIRKS *suddenly leaps for* MIKE. *He seizes him by the throat and pulls him to his feet.*

MIKE

For Gawd's sake. . . .

DIRKS

Got yuh, haven't I, yuh sneakin' thief!

MIKE

Dirks . . . don't, why . . .

[*Struggling to get free.*

DIRKS

Thought yuh could fool me, huh? Yuh bloody stinker! Thought I wouldn't know yuh slipped the booty—before yuh came t' meet me today, huh? Well, I've got yuh, an' I'm gonna . . .

MIKE

Lemme breathe . . . oh. . . .

DIRKS

Kill yuh!

MIKE

I didn't! . . . didn't! . . .

[*Gasping.*

[*The* CHINESE WOMAN *has risen and stands in the shadows behind the two sailors.*

DIRKS

I'll choke it outa your throat. Choke yuh till the blood drips outa your eyes. Till your scabby face turns black. (DIRKS *presses* MIKE *to the floor.*) Yuh scurvy rat! (*A pause.*) Stealin' from a messmate. (*Another pause.*) Wot I'm gonna do—t' you—ain't fit for—

[*Unnoticed by* DIRKS, MIKE *has been groping for the table with his right hand, where* DIRKS' *knife glitters*

near the edge. Suddenly MIKE's *hand touches the table, feels for the knife, gets it.* DIRKS *turns his head, sees the gleam of the knife, but in the instant he has relaxed his hold and* MIKE *has regained his feet.* DIRKS *stumbles back to the wall Right.*

MIKE (*slowly advancing on* DIRKS)

My turn now, eh? (*Laughs harshly.*) Worm turned, eh?

DIRKS

Mike! No . . . no . . .

[DIRKS, *tries to escape, but* MIKE *is on him swiftly, and* DIRKS *is forced to seize* MIKE's *knife arm.*

DIRKS (*panic-tricken*)

Don't . . . matey . . . don't . . . I wasn't gonna hurt yuh. . . .

[MIKE *puts all his strength behind the knife, forcing* DIRKS *back against the table.* MIKE *is tense with the joy of ascendancy.*

MIKE

Don't worry . . . matey . . . (*sneering*) . . . I'm not gonna hurt you . . . No-o-o-o-o.

DIRKS

For Gawd's sake! Mike . . . I'm your mate . . . hell . . .

MIKE (*drawing out his words vindictively*)

It's hell . . . for you. You're hard-boiled, ainttcha? Not afraid of anythin'—in heaven're hell—

DIRKS

Mike—

[*Bearing upon it with all his weight,* MIKE *sinks the knife into* DIRKS *breast, once, twice.* DIRKS *writhes, groans, and falls to the floor.*

MIKE

Not afraid—of heaven're hell—huh? (*Pause.*) Make your own law, huh? (*Pause.*) Got the whole world buffaloed, eh? (*Pause.*) Not afraid—of ivory idol—huh? (*Pause.*) Not afraid—Oh Gawd!—am I crazy? Dirks! Don't *die* . . . you made me . . .

[MIKE *falls to his knees beside* DIRKS' *body and sobs drunkenly.*

The CHINESE WOMAN *glides from the shadows, takes the hand of the blind* CHINESE MAN *and leads him to the companionway. She turns to the table, looks around carefully, then slides her hand underneath the edge of the table at the point where she clung when caught by* MIKE. *She pulls a tremendous pearl from under the edge of the table, holds it up to the light, and detaches from it a wad of gum.*

CHINESE WOMAN (*throwing gum to the floor*)

Chew gum—fight—yes.

MIKE (*maudlin, his head on* DIRKS' *breast*)

I didn't want to . . . I didn't. . . .

CHINESE WOMAN (*turning to* CHINESE MAN *with a faint smile, speaking softly*)

T' ai meng bu t' chi T' sou wei shi ma t'ai meng hsiang shu. Dang si t'ai meng gu hsiang T'chang sa di.

CHINESE MAN (*as they go out. Questioningly*)

T'a?

CURTAIN

MINNIE FIELD

BY

ELLSWORTH P. CONKLE

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CHARACTERS

TIP FIELD
JIM DAY
ALT PAGE
CORNIE YOUNG
MEL CLARK

First produced at the University Theatre, May 1–5, 1928, by the Department of Drama, Yale University.

MINNIE FIELD

Five men sitting up with TIP FIELD'S *wife's corpse. The men sit in the kitchen; the corpse and coffin are in the spare front-room just off. It is three o'clock in the morning.* JIM DAY *has his feet cocked up on the stove-hearth. He leans back and smokes his pipe.* ALT PAGE *leans against the wall on the other side of the stove.* CORNIE YOUNG *sits at the table nibbling at this and that.* MEL CLARK *stands at the door looking out into the night through the glass pane.* TIP FIELDS *sits in a small rocker with his nose in a newspaper. He reads and rocks and reads and rocks. Things go slowly, quietly.*

ALT

Settin' up with a corpse is like goin' a-courtin'.

JIM

How so, Alt?

ALT

A feller'll think-a some-a th' dad-blamedest things sometimes.

CORNIE

Don't they, though?

ALT

I reckon Tip's a-thinkin' 'bout Minnie in thur . . . dead. Et's too bad.

CORNIE

You shore got my sympathy, Tip. I don't what I'd do ef I was t' lose Emmy.

ALT

A man's losin' his wife's 'bout like him a-losin' his best mare.

JIM

Feller cain't break in a new one t' no account.

CORNIE

Leastwise, not one like Minnie was.

MEL

Don't take et too hard, Tip.
[*Silence.*

TIP

I wonder ef . . . ef that sow's gone an' laid on her pigs.
[*The men glance at one another.*

JIM

Oh. Well . . . I ain't heard no squealin'.

TIP

Guess we'd a heard et if she had-a.

ALT

Them little devils shore does squeal.

CORNIE

Feller cain hear 'em in th' next county on a clear night like this'n.

MEL

I wudn't worry none, Tip. You got s'many other things t' worry over.

TIP

I ain't worryin' none. I was just . . . wonderin'. [*Silence.*

CORNIE

Say, fellers . . . here's this card's got t' be wrote on. [*He motions to a card on the table.*

JIM

What'll we write on et?

ALT

What you think, Tip? Et's your folkses' funeral.

TIP

You fellers is payin' for th' flowers. Say what you're a mind to. You cain't hurt me none what you say.

MEL

Say as how th' flowers was given by all th' neighbors to th' diseased.

JIM

Might put in a little verse or so.

CORNIE

Anybody know any verse t' put on?

MEL

Roses is red;
Vi'lets is blue;

Sugar is sweet;
So're you.

ALT

That's all th' po'try I know of.

TIP

Et's good enough.

JIM

Might say;

Roses is red;
Vi'lets is blue;
Sugar is sweet;
So *was* you.

. . . since Minnie *ain't* no more.

CORNIE

You ain't got no objections to us callin' Minnie "sweet" have you, Tip?

TIP

I reckon not. They always say nice things 'bout th' dead even when they mayn't be true. Cain't hurt me none.

MEL

Us folks allus thought Minnie was about *it*.

JIM

We all liked Minnie, too. She allus was doin' somethin' for Amy and th' kids.

ALT

Funny how Minnie come t' die, ain't et?

TIP

Nothin' funny about et. She just kicked up her heels, passed in her checks, an' died. That's all.

MEL

Minnie was allus a workin' perty hard whenever I seen her.

TIP

That was one thing about Minnie. She went an' killed herse'f of hard work. I give her credit for that.

CORNIE

Everybody's got to die sooner as later. Some-a 'em got to die a-workin'. A feller gets ketched that-a-way sometimes.

JIM

I reckon it won't never ketch you that-a-way, will et, Tip?

TIP

I ain't aimin' for et to, Jim.

[*The men laugh, except* TIP, *who reads. Then the men become conscious of their place and the corpse. Silence.*

ALT

Et's a funny thing. . . . Death is.

CORNIE

Et strikes when a person ain't lookin' for et.

ALT

And et strikes *where* a feller ain't lookin' fer et, too.

JIM

Et struck Jenny's pa right below th' collar-bone when et struck him. They was a black-an'-blue spot there big as a goose-egg whur et struck him. We all seen et when they was layin' him out.

MEL

Et's like lightnin' strikin' a forked tree.

TIP

Minnie was carryin' up a bucket-a warter from th' well at th' foot of th' hill. Ag'in she got ha'f way up, she keeled over an' spilt all th' warter out. That's about all they was to et. I called up th' doc an' he come an' worked on her. I had t' fetch up another bucket-a warter m'se'f.

ALT

Et's too bad. Tip.

TIP

Shore . . . is.

[*Silence.* CORNIE *eats.*

CORNIE

These yeller t'mater p'serves is fine, Tip.

TIP

Minnie put 'em up for th' winter. She was allus doin' some durned-fool thing like that. Got a whole cellar-full-a that kinda truck.

CORNIE

Cudn't-a been better if I'd-a put 'em up m'se'f, Tip.

JIM

I hear none-a your folks is comin' to th' funeral, Tip.

TIP

I . . . reckon not.

ALT

So *I* heard. How come, Tip?

TIP

They didn't like Minnie none. They said she was allus too smart. She was allus tryin' t' git me t' pull my freight an' git away from 'em. Minnie was plannin' big on that. Th' day she dies she got a letter from Montana or somewheres 'bout new land. She even drawed a plan for a new house out there. My folks didn't like that none.

JIM

Well . . . us folks all liked Minnie real well. Mighty well.

ALT

Us folks, too.

MEL

Minnie was allus smilin'. I never seen her when she wasn't smilin'.

TIP

She cudn't tolerate none-a my folks none. I reckon my folks was as good as hern.

JIM (*pointing with his pipe-stem at* TIP.)

Wasn't nobody good as Minnie, Tip.

TIP

I . . . reckon not.

[*Silence.*

MEL

Who put that rose on her coffin in thur, Tip?

TIP

She done et herse'f.

JIM

She done et?

ALT

How'd *she* do et, Tip?

TIP

Couple-a years ago she set them posies out in th' back yard. An' she says to me: "Ef I ever die when those-there roses are in bloom, Tippy dear, put one of them on my coffin." So . . . her ma went an' done et.

JIM

Et looks mighty perty and simple. Naturally I don't go much on beauty. But that-there was a beautiful idea, I say.

MEL

My Haley's that-a-way, too. Women-folks is durned funny critters.

CORNIE

They shore put th' trimmin's on a feller.

ALT

I didn't 'mount to a durn b'fore I was married.

JIM

You don't 'mount t' much more now, do you, Alt?

ALT

I reckon me and you is on a par, ain't we, Jim?

JIM

That suits me, Alt.
[*The men laugh loudly.*

CORNIE

Oh, hum. Kinda sleepy. You reckon th' corpse is all right, in there?

ALT

Take a look, Mel.

MEL

Et makes me creepy t' snoop 'round a corpse. Cornie, you look.

CORNIE

Nothin' to that, Mel. (*He goes to the left door and opens it.*) They ain't nothin' could hurt a person 'bout a corpse.

MEL

Mebby not. But they're like cold mashed p'taters; they ain't got no life to 'em.

CORNIE

Ever'thing's all O.K's fur's I can see. Th' women is

snorin' like all-git-out in th' spare bedroom. Sounds like a hog-pen.

TIP

Et *is* . . . with them in it.

CORNIE (*looking in*)

You got a nice front-room in there, Tip. Fixed up a sight better'n ourn is at home.

TIP

Et was . . . her.

CORNIE (*closing the door*)

Whur' you git th' pianner at?

TIP

She got et. She usta thump on et in th' evenings. "In th' Gloamin'" and "Darlin' Nellie Gray" and such.

JIM

Must-a cost a sight. Emmy got a parler-organ and et kept me poverty-struck for five years hand-runnin'.

TIP

Didn't cost *me* nothin'. She got et with her butter 'n egg money. Took seven years. There et is in there now. Doin' nobody no good. She was just thet-a-way.

ALT

You cain cut et up for kindlin' wood, Tip.

CORNIE

Et'd make a good hen-coop for yer little chickens. All you got t' do is t' take out th' works and put a strip-a tar paper on top.

TIP

May do that.

MEL

Well . . . who's goin' t' write out that card? There et is on th' table.

JIM

I cain't write so's a person can read et.

TIP

Don't worry . . . nobody's goin' to read et.

CORNIE

I cain't draw my X's so's a person can make 'em out. And my Z's have got curley-cues on 'em. You write et out, Alt.

ALT

I wud . . . but I sprained my ankle an' I'm stiff all over so's I can't even scratch my own back.

JIM

A-course, we couldn't ask Tip t' do et.

TIP

Stick th' durned flowers on without a card. Who cares for style? I been gettin' my belly-full-a style fer th' past ten years.

CORNIE

Just's you say, Tip. We just thunk et'd be kind-a nice, that's all.

[MEL *looks out the window.*

MEL

Et's gettin' daylight out, boys. I got t' be goin' on home.

JIM

Me, too. Them calves got t' be tended to.
[*The men start to put on their coats and hats.*

TIP

You fellers is comin' back t' carry th' woman to th' grave, ain't you?

CORNIE

I reckon so. We was 'pointed pall-bearers. Won't be hard to carry Minnie. She didn't weigh no more'n a bag-a-feathers.

ALT

I guess I orta be hikin' on home, too. I got some chores t' do.

JIM

You goin' my way, Cornie? Guess I'll cut across the hog pasture: it's shorter for me.

MEL

Whut'll you do without Minnie to do your milkin' now, Tip?

TIP

Reckon I'll have t' . . . git me another woman.
[*The men stop still.*

CORNIE

You . . . got anybody . . . in mind, Tip?

TIP

I got Annie Smith in mind.

JIM

Ab Smith's dorter?

TIP

Yeh. I've had her in mind for some time. When I seen Minnie was . . . ailin'.

[*The men look at one another. They say nothing. Silence.*

ALT

Well . . . I . . . I guess I'll be . . . goin' on, boys.

JIM

Me too, Alt.

TIP

I may need you fellers later t' help me bust up that pianner in there . . . when we git Minnie out of the way.

CORNIE

Any time. Ef I ain't doin' somethin'.

ALT

Me, too. Most likely I *won't* be.

MEL

I guess . . . I'll just take a look . . . at Minnie in there . . . b'fore I go.

JIM

Me . . . too.

[MEL *opens the door. The men look in.*

MEL

Th' sun . . . looks perty . . . shinin' on that . . . rose, Tip.

JIM

Shore . . . does.

ALT

Et's tough luck t' lose a woman like Minnie.

MEL

She was allus smilin' and bright.

TIP

I'll git over et all right. Don't worry none 'bout me.

CORNIE

I reckon . . . we won't . . . much.

[*Alt opens the outside door. The men start out.*

MEL (*turning toward Tip*)

I s'pose th' baby is inside th' coffin with Minnie, ain't it?

TIP

It's layin' on her breast. (*Pause.*) They wa'n't no use wastin' two coffins.

[*The men leave.* TIP *resumes his reading and rocking. The sunlight washes out the pale of the lamplight.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY

"L"

BY

LEOPOLD L. ATLAS

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CHARACTERS

Milkman
Cop
Beggars
Tradesmen
The Morning Crowd
Director
Newsboys
Speechmonger
Madonna
Daughter
Girl
Boy

First produced in the University Theatre, Jan. 24–28, 1928, by the Department of Drama, Yale University.

"L"

Scene: The curtain rises on a street over which an elevated line runs. The L posts stand close to the curb—heavy massive pillars zigzagging upwards, or perhaps crawling downwards, a matter of how you look at it. At the left corner of the stage is a stairway leading up to the L station. In the rear is a solid wall of business shops, looking like a painted backdrop. The sidewalk is between this wall and the L pillars. The corner building on the extreme right of stage or even in the auditorium, near stage, is a movie palace over which an electric sign flamboyantly announces Antonio Rudolpho in "Passionate Nights." Next to this, but on stage surely, is a pawnshop with its emblem of three golden balls, and then a butcher's shop, and a music store (about the center of the street) with a large exaggerated radio horn over it, and a bakery, and a barber shop with its red and white pole, a drugstore and a grocery.

All through the play the lighting of the scene progresses as that of a twenty-four hour day.

At present it is just before dawn. The street is a mass of shadows, moonlit and still.

The hollow resounding clack-clack of heels striking the pavement breaks through the intense blue silence of the night. A COP *walks down the street, yawning and swaying to and fro as he looks vacantly at the blank-eyed buildings. His club wags behind him.*

There is the rattle of a milk wagon over cobble-stoned streets and a long drawn "Whoa."

A MILKMAN *enters, white-jacketed, carrying a lantern and basket.*

MILKMAN (*wearing big rubbers that clump, clump*)

'Lo Mike.

COP (*warming himself by his swinging arms*)

'Lo Pete.

MILKMAN

Well, another day—

COP

Yep, another day—

MILKMAN (*joshingly*)

Still watching the world?

COP (*same*)

Yep—still feeding the world?

MILKMAN

Well, 'at's the way it goes.

COP

Yep—

MILKMAN

Well, so long Mike.

COP

Yep, so long Pete, see yuh t'morrer.

[*The* MILKMAN *goes out,* COP *yawns again, and slowly walks down the street whistling to himself. The street*

is deserted for a moment and then several shadowy figures, as if waiting for the COP *to leave, sneak their way one by one, oblivious each of the other, to the L station. As they meet and become aware of one another, in husky surprised whispers:*

ONE

You here—

THREE

What are you doing here—

FIVE (*sliding around corner of steps*)

This is my place—

TWO

Where'd ya learn that, first come first served, it's mine—

FOUR

No, it's mine—

ALL (*in unison*)

It's mine, I came first—
Like hell you came first—

THREE

Listen to them, will yuh; it's my place—

FIVE

Where d'ya get off with that stuff—

TWO

I'm telling you this is my place. I've begged here

nearly two years and I'm gonna beg here to the end of my life—now beat it—

FOUR

Who're ya pushin'—

ONE

Easy with the hands there—

TWO

Who's asking you—

THREE

Mind your own business—

FOUR

This is my business and my place—

FIVE

Take your hands off me—

ONE

Watch your mitts there—

THREE

Who's gonna make me—

FIVE

Leggo. It's my place and—

TWO

Ouch. You damn lousey—

FOUR

It's my place—

[*together*]

ALL

Mine—Mine—Mine—

ONE

Leggo—

TWO

Oh you—

THREE

Leggo—

FOUR

Ouch—

FIVE

I tell you—

ONE

Shut up, will yuhze, yu'll have the cops on yuhze—
(*Pause.*)

THREE

Quit yer fightin'—

FIVE

Shut yuh trap—

TWO

It's my place, good people, fellow beggars—

FOUR

Like hell it is—

ONE

Quiet, wanna get pinched—

TWO

Good people, I'm an old man—

THREE

We'll bury yuh—

FIVE

'Bout time y' kicked off

TWO

But, good people, I'm old and a cripple. I've got six children, they're starving—

ONE

Aw, become a beggar—

THREE

Go to the charity sassieties if you're that bad off—

TWO

Friends—

FOUR

Oh listen to this guy—

FIVE

First he hits and then he yells friends—

TWO

Friends, listen to me—please—I haven't got a nickel to my name—this is the best place in town for begging—I used to be well-to-do but I've spent all my money sending a son to law school and a daughter to medical school—help me, friends, help me—

ALL (*in unison*)

Haw—haw—haw—haw—

FOUR

What do you want to help for—

ONE

You've raised a true beggar's family—ha-ha—

THREE

A lawyer and a doctor—hee-hee—

FOUR

The bourgeois cultured-beggars—

ALL (*in unison*)

Begging for justice—
For diseases—
For clients—

ONE

Hoodwinking the wide-awake American public—ha-ha—

THREE

Ha-ha—a beggar's family—

TWO

Friends, please give me the place—

ONE

No—no—

TWO

Give it to me—

[*together*]

THREE
To me—

FIVE
To me—

FOUR
Silence!
[*A figure leaps out of their midst.*

ONE
Who for—

THREE
We're free American citizens—

FOUR
Silence! Gentlemen, this is the best begging spot in the city, isn't it—

TWO
You bet—

FIVE
It's mine—

ONE
Mine—

TWO
Mine—

THREE
Mine—

[*together*]

FOUR
Mine—

FIVE
Mine—

FOUR
Silence, I'm not asking you whose place it is, I'm telling you. To the best goes the best. I'm the greatest beggar of you all—

ONE
Dirty liar—

TWO
Braggart—

THREE
What are you—

ONE
Hypocrite—

TWO
You lie—

THREE
Faker—

FIVE
Who are you—

[*together*]

FOUR
I am a poet—

ONE

What about it—

TWO

What the hell difference does that make—

THREE

Who wants to know—

[*together*]

FOUR

I'm the greatest beggar of you all—

ALL (*whine*)

Yeah!

FOUR

I wear my heart on my sleeve—I broadcast my perversities—I parade my nervous ills—my deformities—my agonies—I beg wholesale—buy books, pamphlets, magazines, papers. I flaunt my ills. I beg for their ears, their eyes, their time, their money, their praise, and everybody sympathizes and pities and pays me. That's the trick a beggar must learn—make them believe in you. That's me. I vivisect and put myself in a paper cage and people like it. I tell them my hard-luck stories in a way that hits them. Women kiss my feet for it. I tell them how great I am and that nobody is greater than the poet; and I don't tell this to just one or two like you do—I tell the whole wide world—

ONE

Can the sales talk—

THREE

If you're so damn successful, then what do you want this place for?

FOUR

Well, you see I'm just a beginner—(*Another jeering general whine—"Yeah"*) and I was telling you how the big men in my line got started.

ONE

Get down, you humbug.

TWO

Mob him—

THREE

Chase him—

FIVE

Shyster—

[*together*]

ONE

Tryin' t' steal my place—

TWO

Your place—it's mine—

ONE

Liar—

TWO

I came first—

THREE

I did—

FOUR
I did—

FIVE
How d'ya like this—

ONE
Yuh will, will yuh,—

TWO
Leggo—

THREE
Stop—

FOUR
Mine—

FIVE
Like hell—

[*together*]

[*They are fighting again and raising a subdued hubbub. The light has gradually become that of dawn. Three shop doors open simultaneously and out walk the Butcher, the Baker and the Candlestickmaker at the same moment with military precision. They are dressed in their white-aproned trade regalia and armed with broomsticks. The Butcher is hale, hearty, rosy cheeked, bloodstained, and coarse; the Baker, short, dumpy, dough-faced and rolling-bodied; the Candlestickmaker, tall, thin, stringy-haired, wax-faced, and sharp-eyed. They march on the* BEGGARS *who cringe before them.*

TRADESMEN (*all together*)
Onward.
(*One step forward.*)

ONE
For Law.

TWO
And Order.

THREE
And Peace.

ALL
Onward.
[*Another step forward.*

BEGGARS
(*Whispering as they go three steps backward.*)

ONE
Cheese it—

TWO
Help—

THREE
They'll beat us—

FOUR
The Forces—

FIVE
Help—

TRADESMEN

ONE

Scat—

TWO

Beat it—

THREE

Don't disturb honest people in their sleep.

BEGGARS

(*edging forward*)

ONE

We're just as honest as you are.

FOUR

We're professional men.

THREE

The oldest in the world.

FIVE

Beggars—

TRADESMEN

ONE

Shut up.

TWO

Clear the streets.

THREE

They're ours.

ONE

We paid for them.

ALL TRADESMEN

Beat it!

[*They flourish their brooms menacingly. The* BEGGARS *scamper away for safety, whining. With a haughty "haw" the* TRADESMEN *wheel about and tramp heavy-footed to their individual shops and immediately with the same stroke begin sweeping the walks in front of them.*

TRADESMEN

(*with each stroke of the broom*)

THREE

Law.

TWO

And Order.

ONE

For Business.

TWO

Business is good.

ONE

Business is bad.

ALL

Business is business.

ONE

Sweep the streets for business.

TWO

Keep them clean.

THREE

Keep them in order.

ONE

Order in the temple of business.

TWO

And Reverence.

THREE

And Awe.

[*They have reached the curb.*

ONE

(*in alarm*)

We're sweeping the dirt on our patrons.

TWO

Oh, that's all right.

THREE

They'll get plenty of dirt before the day is done.

ONE

It's bad business.

TWO

It's good business.

THREE

Give them the dirt.

ALL

(*in unison*)

They like it—They live it—They eat it

[*A loud irritating ringing of many small alarm clock bells all over the street. Day has begun. The three* TRADESPEOPLE *return with hurrying steps to their posts in front of their stores and stand erectly waiting. A moment and the crowd streams*[1] *in, yawning, chattering, stretching, mumbling, all hurrying to the L station—a continuous unending flow. They stamp up the steps with the rhythmic thump of heels on stairs, up, and across, and around, and still up. Turnstile sets rhythm.*

[1] 1. EARLY RISERS.
(Very slow—dragging feet—head down—clump, clump—round shoulders—arms hanging down limp.)
2. YAWNERS AND STRETCHERS.
(Same rhythm—slow exaggerated arm and head movements.)
3. SLOW DRESSERS.
(Same rhythm—buttoning collars—coats. Adjusting ties—smoothing hair—putting on overcoats.)
4. EATERS.
(Same rhythm—coffee—bread—knife and fork.)
5. NEWSPAPER READERS AND MONEY-COUNTERS.
(Goose step—reading down column in four head jerks—

turning page every sixteen beats. Money-counters reaching into pockets and counting coins.)

6. Brisk Walkers.
(Four-four time—low goose-step and swinging arms—heads up.)

7. Pushers.
(Bending forward—1—2—3—4—5—6—three steps forward and three back. Arms out—palms up for first three steps forward.)

8. Runners.
(Arms alternating back and forward—sliding run—not much knee action.)

[*As they pass, the Shopkeepers nod regularly "Good-morning, good-morning" to no one in particular and to the great mass in general. The hurrying and scurrying of feet; the movement of heads, arms faces, sounds, bodies; the shambling, the thumping, the clacking,—all make a continuous motion. The crowd is the same all the time—they talk as the Shopkeepers do to no one in particular. The* cop *comes down the street and leaning against an L post watches the crowd weariedly.*

MORNING CROWD [1]

Oh hell—can't get a wink of sleep—sleep—sleep—what do you think I was dreaming about last night—work—to hell with work—lousey work—always go to work—day in day out—work—work—work—so I says to her—Gee, I couldn't pull myself outa bed—nice morning—great morning—beautiful morning—but it's better to lie in bed—bed—oh sweet bed—[*first crescendo.*

[1] What follows is Business. The scene may be divided as Producer thinks best among the eight groups mentioned in the just preceding footnote.

Hurry we'll be late—can't finish breakfast anymore —just a cup of coffee—anahunkabread—and some eggs—scrambled—soft-boiled—poached—just a cup of coffee and some bread—There goes our train—they come every three minutes—every two minutes—every minute—every second—oh boy, I could sleep for two years straight and never catch up—what a dance last night, God!—what's your hurry—

[*second crescendo.*

Hurry—hurry—hurry!—I read in the papers last night—is that so, now would you believe it—it's all in the game you know—if I can't make more money—money—money—Great Scott and Little Wales—Charity begins at home—Law is the game you want to get into—I'm so tired I could drop from sleep—sleep—sleep—what a dame—what a dame—couldn't teach her nuthin'—

[*third crescendo.*

Come on let's hurry—hurry—hurry!—there goes a train—

[*from above.*

Washastep—washastep—Ohriodonavanoo—nesstop —washadoors—washadoors—hurry—run—we'll miss it—on the go—run run run—it's late—late—late—run—push—rush—crush—dash—smash—crash—run—late—hurry—hurry—run run run—

[*The movement has become more electric now. People rush through the street in a maddening zig-zag weaving—coming from no place—going no place—coming from everywhere—going everywhere—shouting—gesticulating—pushing—here, there, everywhere. Ten of the crowd who are to play the Business scene*

are left at centre [1] *as the rest group at back as if in offices. Business is in full swing—typewriters clicking, telephones ringing, and tickers rattling.*

ONE

Dictation—

SIX

Dictation—

TWO

Dictation, miss—

FOUR

Dear sir, Gentlemen, Madam,—

THREE

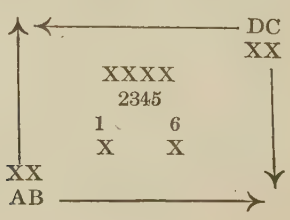
Yours very truly—

[1] BUSINESS SCENE

(Typewriters give the rhythm)
Four men, and two girls, on high stools set thus:

XXXX
X X

Girl walking up and down on each side,
one stage right—one stage left—big cuffs.
Man walking from left to right at back—eye shade.
Man walking from right to left at front—eye shade.
When A and B and C and D meet they say "O. K.!"
When A and D and B and C meet they say "Cheque!"



FIVE

84—92—16—471 dollars—dollars—cents—

TWO

58—49—39 debit—

THREE

Credit—

FOUR

Profit—

FIVE

Loss—

ONE

Sorry, sir—

SIX

Sorry, sir—

FIVE

Got no time—

FOUR

Busy—

THREE

Busy—

TWO

Busy—

ONE

Your letter of the twelfth inst. on hand and beg to note—

TWO

Report of inventory for the year 1927—in stock 4793—sold 3421 on hand 1372 corkscrews—

THREE

Corkscrews—

FOUR

Corkscrews—

TWO

Business—

THREE

Business—

FOUR

Business—

FIVE

Business—Hello, operator—operator please, gimme Bryant 4265. thank you—

SIX

You're welcome, excusit please—

THREE

Operator, operator, a little service please—

TWO

Get in on this deal; it's the best thing you ever saw, small investment big returns—

THREE

Money—

FOUR

Money—

FIVE

Money—

ONE

Opening report stock market—

TWO

International Nickel 82—1/8—

THREE

Omnibus 12–1/4—

FOUR

Pan Pete B 41½—

FIVE

US Rubber 55—

ONE

Whom do you wish to see—name sir—sorry sir—in conference—

SIX

Sorry sir—sorry—

FIVE

Miss Remington—

FOUR

Dictation—

THREE

Dictation—

TWO

Dear sir—Beg to note—yours very truly—Got it?

ONE

Yes sir—Dear sir—Hope Joe takes me for lunch today—yours forever—

TWO

Right—

THREE

Right—

FOUR

Right—

THREE

Speed—

TWO

Speed—

FIVE

Speed—

FOUR

Time is money—

ONE

Almost time for lunch—

SIX

Can't come too soon—

FIVE

236—943—158 net assets 2487—

FOUR

Yes sir—thank you sir—

TWO

See you for lunch sir—

THREE

Yes sir—

FOUR

Hello—hello, operator, meet me for lunch at one—

SIX

Whom do you wish to see—sorry sir—out for lunch—

ONE

Oh God when does that lunch hour begin—
[*Noon whistle. Everything stops, transfixed.*

ALL

Anybody calls tell them I'll be back in an hour—

WOMAN

D'ja see that dress, knock your eye out.

MAN

I always like to walk around during lunch-hour—

SECOND MAN

Hello, Charlie, how're you—

THIRD MAN

My old man's all right, he knows a thing or two—

FOURTH MAN

Cross my heart I took her out and it cost me twelve smacks cash—

FIFTH MAN

Where do you eat—

SIXTH MAN

If you've got the dough you're all right—

SEVENTH MAN

God almighty, I wouldn't wanna be in his boots—

SECOND WOMAN

I like Childs better than the tea rooms—

EIGHTH MAN

Yes the wife and I are goin' to build a beautiful bungalow in Brooklyn—

NINTH MAN

Aw you give me a swift pain in the neck—

THIRD WOMAN

Gee I'm almost starved—starved—starved—

TENTH MAN

Starved—

THIRD WOMAN

Starved—

FIRST WOMAN

They've got a sale over at Feltman's—

FOURTH WOMAN

Look at that hat she's wearing—

ELEVENTH MAN

Can't get a look in on those things, politics, 'atsall politics—

THIRD MAN

Those ain't legs those are piano stools—

TWELFTH MAN

No listen, Mary, don't start up with me—

THIRTEENTH MAN

Boy did I pack in a meal—

FIRST MAN

I'll walk it off—

FOURTEENTH MAN

Walk around—walk around—

FIFTH WOMAN

Look there's Sadie—

SIXTH WOMAN

Do you like my gloves—

[*They are now walking around in leisurely way but with an inherent briskness, looking in shop windows, chatting, greeting each other,* MEN *eyeing the* WOMEN *and the* WOMEN *returning their stares with feigned aloofness. In general strolling about during the lunch-hour and having a good time of it. The stream is continuous, the same people coming and going. Then suddenly a* WOMAN'S *scream from the L Station. For a second the* CROWD *stops dead in its tracks and runs wildly hither and thither like so many ants. The* TRADESMEN *seek safety in their stores. A second scream and the* CROWD *stops as though suddenly petrified. A* CAMERA MAN *and Movie* DIRECTOR *run down the street (a theatre aisle) focusing on the scene. The*

action starts flickering like a motion picture. A REPORTER *carrying a large typewriter runs on the street ready for work.* NEWSBOYS *mass at a corner, laden with "extras," waiting to rush on the street as soon as the crime is committed.*

DIRECTOR

Everybody hold it—look alive—get some action in this—Ready—Shoot—

[*The action begins—a* WOMAN *screams—the camera grinds—typewriters click away—the tempo is one and a half times the speed of a movie—jerky—electric. Simultaneous with the scream, the* COP *comes from behind an L post—a* MASKED MAN *gun in hand runs wildly down the station steps—*COP *spying him makes a grab for his gun—A shot!* COP *drops—another scream—*THIEF *runs around the corner—the whir of an automobile motor.*

DIRECTOR (*ordering the action just before it occurs*)

Come on, scream—cop—crook—run—shoot—fall—crowd scream—and away—[*Temperamentally.*] Great—stupendous—lavish epic—Realism in Art!—Cut!

[*At the word "cut" silverscreen flicker stops.* DIRECTOR, CAMERA MAN, REPORTER *leave on the run; the* CROWD *makes a mad rush and forms a circle around the body of the* POLICEMAN; NEWSBOYS *run in shouting and selling their newspapers to the* CROWD *on the street and in the audience.*

NEWSBOYS

[NEWSBOY ONE *starts with Section* 1 *of what follows,*

running down right aisle. NEWSBOY TWO *starts with Section* 2, *then* 3, *then* 1, *running down center aisle.* NEWSBOY THREE *starts with Section* 3, *following it with Section* 1, *then Section* 2, *running down left aisle.*

ONE

Wudextra—wudextra—big murder just committed on Wall Street—Read all about it—Babe Ruth walked three times—Wudextra—Read about it—read about it—read about it—Worldtimesnews mirror—Wha pape ya read—Mrs. Killman acquitted—Cop shot defending wife and children—

TWO

Paper—paper—paper—paper—All about big scandal not yet committed—Pictures of girl in strip poker game on front page—Five different views all for three cents—Fire—Fire—Murder—Wudextra—terrible news abroad, Giants lose double header to Cincinnati—Paper you read—

THREE

Paper you read—paper you read—High school student shoots self—Love affair with pretty bobbed-hair teacher—Man killed defending humanity—Private life and diary of Marie of Romania—O de O de O de O de Extra—Scandal—scandal—murder—fire—big divorce case—now going on—wha pape yuh read—Wudextra—Wudextra—Goin' like hot cakes—

[*They sell their papers to the audience. Suggestion: the papers are of the following type. A large sheet of blank paper folded over tabloid size—Name "Daily*

Blank"—Motto—"All news fit for Americans to read"—The paper is entirely blank except for the headline. It is now late afternoon and getting darker. A great moan rises from the CROWD *circled around the body of the* POLICEMAN.

ONE

Oh God, my fish is burning—

TWO

Frances loves John but I don't care—

THREE

Business is lousey—burn it—burn it—burn it—collect insurance—

FOUR

He says "Mother is the necessity of invention" but he's all wrong—

FIVE

Boy, she's hot, look at those legs, ain't they terrible—

ALL (*in a deep rising groan*)

Oh terrible—terrible—terrible—

ONE

All I've got to do is buy phosphorus and insurance—

TWO

My old man said to get the hell outa the house—

THREE

Exteriority complex, moriarity complex, interiority complex—

FOUR

Oh my God I left my baby all alone—

FIVE

So I went and saw that movie and was it terrible—

ALL (*again in a deep rising groan*)

Oh terrible—terrible—terrible—

ONE

There's nothing like a good homemade meal—

TWO

Oh girl what a sheik, look at him—

THREE

If I don't get a raise I'll tell the boss where he gets off—

FOUR

Doing anything to-night kid—atsa stuff, get hot—

FIVE

We've got to get back to wirk—ain't that terrible!

ALL (*beginning to spread apart and go their different ways, moaning all the time*)

Oh terrible—terrible—terrible—

[*The breaking up of the circle around the* COP *discloses a ragged bony* WOMAN, BABE *in arms and a little ragged* GIRL *at her skirts. The* WOMAN *is a living model of the "Give until it hurts" poster,—hollow-*

cheeked, glaze-eyed, grim, toothless, bony arm outstretched. It has become dark now. The store and house lights spring into being one by one every now and then. The CROWD *goes off. A spotlight plays a halo around the head of the* WOMAN *giving her an almost madonna-like effect. As the* CROWD *continues moving and moaning a* MAN *and four* WOMEN *rush into the street and begin haranguing the* CROWD. *The* MAN *in dress and speech is a composite picture of the three great speechmonging types of America—the radio minister, the frockcoated senator, and the sideshow barker. His speech rolls from the solemn, ominous, moral-giving intonations of the minister, to the stentorian, pompous, weighty-worded tones of the senator, to the short, snappy bark of the sideshow man. The* WOMEN *are composites of the Salvation Army lassie, cigarette girl, and Red Cross nurse. While the* SPEECHMONGER *stands on the platform belaboring the* CROWD, *the* GIRLS *run into the midst of them, raising collections and chiming into the different moods of the* SPEECHMONGER. *The radio screams hoarsely.*

StationLMNOPQ—United Press—press—press Association announcing—Give until it hurts—hurts—hurts—hurts—Bla-a-a-a—Give—Press—Station—Hu-u-rts—hurts—hurts—hurts—Bla-a-a-a—

SPEECHMONGER (*haranguing the* AUDIENCE *fierily, up and down the platform*)

Listen to the voice of God Almighty, oh brethren—Give—give—Give until it hurts—dig down—learn the true blessing of religion—God so loved the world—Give—give—give—to this poor christian holy

mother of children—look at her as she stands there forlorn, forsaken, uncared for—look at her—look at her—look at her—

SPEECHMONGER

The only one in captivity ladies and gents—captured in the wilds of Kalamazoo—at the expense of the lives of two men and four horses—captured only after the fiercest battle ever waged in any primeval forest in the wide world—she jigs in the cold—cringes with hunger—cries with pain—

ONE

Hey, Professor, can she do the hootchy-cootchy?

SPEECHMONGER

Knows all the primitive agonies of famine, thirst, bloodshed, work—

TWO

No give us a hot number!

SPEECHMONGER

and misery—gives an exhibition dance of each inside folks—all going on—

FOUR

Show now going on—get your tickets—only one quarter—

SPEECHMONGER

fifty other attractions—only two bits—five nickels—two and a half dimes—twenty-five pennies—one quarter—

THREE

Some dame—whatta shape—Oh boy!

SPEECHMONGER

Imagine only that little part and you make the world safe for democracy—(*applause*) Don't be a yellow slacker—your country needs our money—we are engaged in a great world war—

WOMEN (*breaking out*)

Buy Liberty Bonds—liberty—liberty—liberty—save the world with war—war—War Saving stamps—Help your country in its time of need—Do your bit—Come across or go across—Help—Liberty—War—war—saving stamps—Four and a quarter percent interest—

ONE

Put me down for $200—

WOMEN

Buy—buy—buy—

SPEECHMONGER

Democracy over all—buy the bonds of liberty—

THREE

It's a fake—

SPEECHMONGER

The stamps of war—There's fire and flood and famine—I swear to do away with all this when I'm in Congress—congress—congress—people, the Almighteh

Church of our Grand and Glorious Countreh—the Sanctimonious Cathedral of American Inspiration and Justice—may this flag wave eternally over the broad expanses of our mighty nation—this beautiful symbol of the American people—

THREE

Hurray for the American flag!

SPEECHMONGER

Red for the blood spilled on our soul—white for the purity of our people—

THREE

Three cheers for our side—yah!

SPEECHMONGER

And blue for the heavens that shall never cease casting their light over us—and stars like that which hung over Bethlehem shall lead us into a truer life—

ONE

How 'bout Prohibition?

SPEECHMONGER

in this land of Justice—Free Speech and Golden Opportunity—

TWO

Why don't you get yourself a job?

SPEECHMONGER

If you vote for me I shall keep this going—going—going once—do I hear a bid—going—going twice

do I hear a bid—whatsamatter with you folks—will you let a valuable pure old genuine guaranteed—

THREE

It's a fake!

SPEECHMONGER

article like this be given away for nothing—it's a crime—

FOUR

That looks pretty good—I think I'll put in a bid.

SPEECHMONGER

I've been in the business for fifteen years and never has an article like this been given away so cheaply—It's a shame—an atrocity—a sin—an unpardonable sin against God and Church—Oh Lord, here's this poor forsaken woman whose husband has sacrificed his life for you and you and you, and you sit there heartlessly, coldbloodedly looking on while the greatest show in Coney Island—the greatest show in the United States—the greatest show in the whole wide world is going on—

ONE

Get your ice cold soda—

TWO

Popcorn—chewing gum—ice cream—

THREE

It's a fake!

FOUR

Peanuts—frankfurters—all hot!

SPEECHMONGER

Ffty different marvelous and astounding attractions now being shown inside—this woman is only one of the many we have to offer—see the limbless father of ten children—the headless poet—see—see—see—the glorious golden banners of God and Country and American Womanhood flourished aloft again—into the topless towers of the sky—into the peace and good-will of our Glorious Country— (*Applause.*) Dig into your pockets and give until it hurts—give—give this woman's husband died in the trenches fighting for womanhood—give—give—give me your votes until it hurts—turn your purses inside out and give these women—these girls who Glorify American Womanhood—Oh in this great and prosperous nation of ours let there be no strife—no bloodshed—no turmoil—only peace and brotherly love and unity and to those who dare to desecrate and profane American Ideals show no mercy—kill the radicals—reds—the agitators—the unions—lynch them—murder them—deport them—beat them—exclude them—

ONE

Kill 'em—

SPEECHMONGER

Hang them—

THREE

That's right—

SPEECHMONGER

Jail them—

FOUR

Dam foreigners—

SPEECHMONGER

And make the world safe for Democracy— (*Applause.*) See America First—Vote the Straight Ticket—Glorify the American GIRL—Fight for God and Country—

THREE

Three cheers for the American flag!

SPEECHMONGER

Uphold American Justice—Sin no more—and folks, the biggest show in the world is now going on—only a quarter—twenty-five pennies—every little bit helps—step right up—come on don't be afraid—come up closer and give—give—give—

[*He finishes his speech with a magnificent toss of his leonine head. His accompanying women, now in the crowd, start shouting loudly.*

ONE

The Salvation Army—your country needs you—

TWO

Save your souls with a few pennies—

THREE

Dig into your pockets—who's next?—get 'em right over here.

ONE

Liberty Bonds—War Saving Stamps—Do your bit—

TWO

Save your souls sinners with purity, faith, money—

THREE

Cigars—cigarettes—candies—refreshments—

ONE

Give for the uplifting of American Ideals—

TWO

Come on folks—Come on and help—

ALL (*together*)

Help—help—help—help—
Give—give—give—give—
[*A whistle sharply blown by the* SPEECHMONGER.

SPEECHMONGER (*lifting his arm as though halting traffic.*

All right, folks—give these little girls a big hand—(*Starts applause.*) All right, Glorious Glories, step right up and let's see how much our generous public has contributed!
[*The girls mount the platform.*

SPEECHMONGER (*holding out a bag*)

Pour all the money in here, girls, into the Central Bureau of All Charitable, Patriotic and Fraternal Or-

ders— (*As each one passes and pours the money into the bag.*) God will do right by you sweet child—Dear Madam: I take this appropriate moment to thank you for your untiring efforts in making our campaign a success, Yours very truly—Great show you put on, kid— (*They have all emptied their contribution boxes into the bag.*) All right—Come on, girls, let's go—

[*They start to go off.*

MADONNA [*in a loud coarse voice*

Hey you, where the hell d'yuh think you're going—Come across with my share—

SPEECHMONGER [*turning*

Now my dear young lady—

MADONNA

Can 'at stuff—Who d'yuh think I am, the audience? What d'yuh think I was doin' there posin' for animal crackers—Come across—

SPEECHMONGER

My dear lady—I believe you're laboring under some misunderstanding. Exactly what is it you desire?

MADONNA

Dough—

SPEECHMONGER

Oh, I see—why of course—

MADONNA

Well then, come across—

SPEECHMONGER

Yes, certainly, madam; that is, after we have made our

distributions. You see we have solicitors, campaigners, office workers, advertisers, executive staffs, investigators—

MADONNA

Hey, where do I come off—

SPEECHMONGER

Exactly— (*Turns into exit position.*) Ta—ta—come on, girls!

[*He and the girls trip away gaily.*

MADONNA

Come back here—I'll have the law on you—Where do you get off with that stuff—Don't I ever get a break in this mess—Come on back you—you—Oh—hell—

[*The* CROWD *has become discernible again. They are coming home from work.*

DAUGHTER (*starting to cry*)

Hey—mom—mom—gimme back my dolly—mam-ma—

MADONNA

Oh shut up for a minute. I've got enough troubles without you—

DAUGHTER

I don't care, I want my doll—it's mine—gimme it—

[*Enter* CROWD.

MADONNA

Here— (*She flings the babe in arms to her daughter.*) And shut up—I wanna think—

[*The* CROWD *with tired voices flows past them.*
Going home from work—Tired—Home—Eat—Eat—Eat—Warm—Nice—Tired—Wife—Kids—Eat—Eat—Paper—News—Jokes—Sit—Sports—Sit—Sit—Radio—Jazz—Tired—Home—Home— (*As the movie entrance lights up, with a sudden outburst.*)
Movies—
[*The movie sucks them in, leaving the* MADONNA *and the* GIRL *alone on the street. After a moment a* MAN *enters. It is the* SPEECHMONGER *now wearing a top-hat, cane, and spats. The* MADONNA *spies him and as he comes down the street she walks across his path, making up to him. He stops and looks at her appraisingly.*

HE

Your name please!

MADONNA

Mazie M'Gurk—

HE

Ah, working girl! We ought to get along well together—

MADONNA

Yeh, Labor an' Capital—

HE

Are you a union girl?

MADONNA

No, mister, I'm just a poor working girl—

HE

Why don't you join a union? Don't you realize the

benefits to be derived from such an affiliation? By staying out of their organization you frustrate the unions in organizing a universal war for more pay and less work—

MADONNA

But mister, I only want enough work and enough pay to live on—

HE

Can't you understand that the labors of mankind are founded on the principle of doing as little work as possible for the greatest monetary return? Now, don't tell me you still believe in the fairy tale that people work for the love of the job. Rats, we're not living in the dark ages—we're modern people in a modern age— If you ignorant working people would only learn—

MADONNA

I'm sorry—I'll learn—

HE

I don't want you to learn—I want you to know!

MADONNA

Well, what do you want me to do?

HE

My God, I've been standing here for ten minutes telling you to join the union!

MADONNA

All right!—I—I'll join the union—

HE

Now that's talking the way I like to hear talk— (*He takes out a large book.*) Here's an application blank. All you have to do is sign here and pay me the initiation fee of—oh, by the way, have you any money?

MADONNA (*hunting through her pockets*)

Only—only a quarter—

HE

Oh ye Gods—

MADONNA

How much do you need to join a union—

HE

Only a couple of hundred dollars— (*Going.*) Well, I'm sorry I can't waste any more time here. I can only do business with union women—

MADONNA (*running after him*)

Wait a minute—mister—wait a minute—

HE (*turning*)

Well—

MADONNA

What—what if I work out my initiation fee?

HE (*musing*)

Well— (*Then.*) Well, that doesn't sound so bad—all right, three years' apprenticeship—and remember I'm doing this only because there is still something of the age of Chivalry in me. Come—

[*They start.*

DAUGHTER (*crying out*)

Mama—mama—I wanna go too—

HE

What's that?

MADONNA

That's my little girl—she wants to go with us—

HE (*looking the little girl over*)

No—she's too young yet—too frail—Child Labor Laws—got to give her a proper education first—(*To the mother.*) Give me your quarter— (*She gives it to him, and he in turn hands it to the girl.*) Here's a quarter, and go to the movies. And remember—the movies are the greatest institution for learning in the world. Go on—

DAUGHTER (*running joyfully to the movies*)

Hurray—"Nights of Passion" with Antonio Rudolpho—

[*She goes in.*

HE

Let's go—

MADONNA

Say, who are you?

HE

Cornelius Algernon D'Arcy Rockeford, the 2nd—

MADONNA

Ah, money!

HE

Come now— Let's hurry! We'll go to my luxurious ancestral mansion on Fifth Avenue—let's go!

[*They leave. The electric lights have been going out one by one—the street is empty. Then the movie palace lights go out and the doors open wide. The people stream forth. They walk in all directions toward their homes. This, spoken in flowing rhythm, by a group of (1) yawning people; (2) a group of boys and girls, their arms around each other; and (3) a group spellbound by the performance.*

THREE

What a picture—

TWO

Red—red—hot—soul kisses—red hot mamma—

ONE

Tired—tired—

TWO

Oh boy one night with Antonio and I'd die glad—

THREE

Hot—hot—red hot—

TWO

That's what happens to a wife—to a boy—to a father—to a bachelor—to a girl—to a mother—to a husband—

ONE

Oh boy tired

TWO

Antonio—Antonio—Antonio—

ONE

Goin' to bed—

THREE

Some picture—sleep—sleep—some show—

ONE

Sleep—sleep—sleep—

[*The street is empty again. A violin or piano plays softly on the Radio. A* GIRL *runs in shyly, love enraptured, followed by a love-stricken* YOUTH.

GIRL (*looking up happily at the moon, and singing in time to music*)

Blue skies smiling at me
Nothing but blue skies do I see—

BOY (*in time to music*)

Never saw the moon shining so bright
Never saw things going so right [1]

GIRL (*saying lines in time to music*)

Dawn of to-morrow
Take every sorrow
Bring back the sunshine
I long to see—

[1] (Suggested Music: last bars of *Following You Around.* R. W. Kahn.)

BOY

[*In same way.*

So tired of waiting, lonely without you
Dawn of to-morrow, bring you back to me—[1]

[*As* BOY *finishes the saying of the lines to music, he and the* GIRL *embrace. The* GIRL *is facing stage left and sees the* COP *who has started to stroll on stage in their direction. She drops the embrace and goes, right. The* BOY *turns to go, left, almost collides with* COP, *proceeds off stage, left, as* COP *leans against lamp post and yawns as in first scene. There is the sound of an elevated train whizzing by. The* COP *sways to and fro as he looks vacantly at the blank-eyed buildings. The rattle of a milkwagon over a cobblestone street is heard, with a long drawn-out "Whoa."* A MILKMAN *enters as in the first scene.*

MILKMAN

'Lo, Mike.

COP

'Lo, Pete.

MILKMAN

Well, another day—

COP

Yep, another day—

MILKMAN

Still watching the world?

[1] (Suggested Music: last page and a half of *Dawn of To-Morrow,* JOE GREEN, H. WATTERSON, Inc., N. Y. City.)

COP

Yep—still feedin' the world?

MILKMAN

Yep—'at's the way it goes.

COP

Yep—

MILKMAN

Well so long Mike.

COP

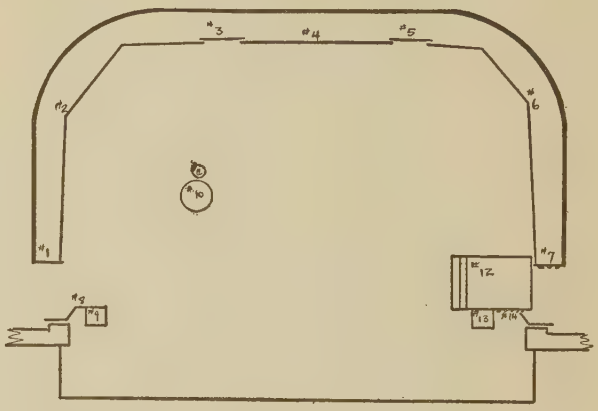
So long Pete, see yuh t'morrer.

[MILKMAN *goes.* COP *yawns again, beginning to stroll down the street again as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

"L"

GROUND PLAN



LEGEND

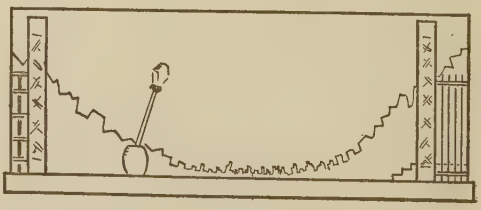
#1: DOME-LIGHTS MASKING PIECE (FLAT) #2, #3, #4, #5, #6: "CITY" GROUND ROW SECTIONS

#7: " " " " (WOODEN GRATING) #8: LATTICE #9, #13: GIRDERS

#10: BARREL #11: STREETLAMP #12: STEPS #14: BARS CITY SKYLINE PROJECTION ON DOME "MOVIE" SIGNS IN AUDITORIUM

COLOR SCHEME: BLACK & DARK PURPLE.

ELEVATION



L. R. WAKEFIELD THOR

OFF-STAGE NOISES AND MUSIC CUES

Milkman and Cop

Count 10 from rise of curtain, then follow with

1. APPROACH OF HORSE AND WAGON
   Slow at Milkman's "Whoa!" to gradual stop; begin
2. CLINK OF MILK BOTTLES
   Continue same until exit of Milkman. Then
3. DEPARTURE OF HORSE AND WAGON
   Which dies away in distance. Then start
4. ELEVATED TRAIN
   Approach and died away in distance.

Beggar Scene

Nothing.

Tradesmen Scene

At word "Law" commence

5. SWEEPING
   Synchronizing with rhythm of lines. Stop at "and awe."
   At cue "They eat it!" Commence
6. ALARM CLOCKS
   Begin with one, add in 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 until all are ringing, then
7. ELEVATED TRAIN
   Approaches as

8. ALARM CLOCKS
Are shut off, one by one, as
9. ELEVATED TRAIN
Dies in distance

Morning Crowd Scene

At cue "Oh Hell" start
10. TURNSTILES
Slow at first, in rhythm of crowd. At cue "Oh sweet bed" accelerate tempo as per direction. At cue "What's your hurry?" accelerate tempo. At cue "Come on, let's hurry!" accelerate tempo, and start
11. ELEVATED TRAIN
Approach and stop. At cue "Run, run, run!" start train and stop
12. TURNSTILES AND START REVETTER, AND START BUSINESS NOISES

Business Scene

After Elevated Train has died in distance start
13. TYPEWRITERS
14. TELEPHONE BELL. Spasmodic ringing every 10 seconds.
15. TICKER
At cue "Oh God, when does that Lunch-hour begin?" Blow
16. NOON WHISTLE
Stop all other noises; start
17. DISHES AND SILVER
Elevated train (approach and die away)

Lunch-hour Scene

At Scream stop

18. DISHES AND SILVER

Movie Scene

At cue "Shoot!" start

19. MOVIE CAMERA CLICK

20. GUN SHOT

At cue, "Cut!" stop

21. MOVIE CAMERA CLICK

Crowd "Terrible" Scene

Nothing. We have to get back to work. Terrible Terrible. Start Radio and Organ.

Speechmonger Scene

At cue, "Your logic's terrible!" start

22. RADIO Repeat announcement as per direction

As Spotlight comes on Madonna, start

23. ORGAN

Play eight bars of Doxology and stop. Continue with very soft

24. RADIO

during Organ; at end of Organ, come up forte, finish announcement.

At start of Speechmonger's Spiel, start

25. ORGAN

At first "Look at her!" die out on Organ and start

26. TOM-TOM

At cue "only two bits" start

27. DRUMS (Snare and Base)

Military March Time—very softly at first, gradual increase. At same time start dying out with

28. TOM-TOM
And stop. At cue, "We are engaged in a great world war" play
29. BUGLE (*or trumpet*)
Reveille, loud at first gradually dying out. However, keep
30. DRUMS
At march time until cue "American Inspiration and Justice" when drums come up forte and
31. BUGLE
Play "Semper Fidelis" once through. Soften.
32. DRUMS
At cue "I shall keep this going." Drums die away and start
33. AUCTIONEER'S HAMMER
Synchronizing with Speechmonger until cue "A sin!" stop Hammer and start
34. ORGAN
It's a Shame
"Nearer My God To Thee" until cue "You and you and you!" At same cue start.
35. TOM-TOM
At cue, "The headless poet" start
36. DRUMS
Military march time. Bring up gradually. At cue "See, see, see!"
Die out
37. TOM-TOM
After cue "Kill the radicals!"
38. GUN SHOT
Follow quickly with one shot after each word as follows:
"The Reds!" (SHOT)

"The Agitators!" (SHOT)
"The Unions!" (SHOT)
"Lynch them!" (SHOT)
"Murder them!" (SHOT)
"Deport them!" (SHOT)
"Beat them!" (SHOT)
"Exclude them!" (SHOT)
"Hang them!" (SHOT)
"Jail them!" (SHOT)
At cue, "Show is going on" come up forte on
39. DRUMS
When Speechmonger puts fingers to mouth blow
40. TRAFFIC COP'S WHISTLE
And stop
41. DRUMS.
As girls dump money into bag, synchronize with
42. CLINK OF COINS
On exact cue "Ta, ta—come on, girls"
43. LONG CHORD IN G ON PIANO
44. LONG ROLL OF DRUMS
Until Speechmonger and Girls exit, then follow with quick
45. CYMBAL CRASH

Crowd Coming Home Scene

At cue "I wanna think!" Start slow
46. TURNSTILES AND ELEVATED TRAIN
At cue "Movies!" stop. Then start
47. PIANO
Play until exit of crowd.—Sequi into "Villain entrance" and stop.

Capitalist Scene

At cue "Passionate Nights With John Gilbert" play
PIANO
Four bars, and stop.

Crowd Leaving Movies Scene

Organ. Exit march
Nothing as yet.

Boy and Girl Scene

At exit of crowd start
49. VIOLIN
50. SWEEPING (in rhythm with Boy and Girl)
At exit stop.

White Wing Scene

At cue "Ve Americans kick dem out—"
51. ELEVATED TRAIN
Approach and die away.

Milkman and Cop Scene

Count 10 after Cop enters then follow with
52. APPROACHING OF HORSE AND WAGON
Slow at Milkman's "Whoa" to gradual stop; begin
53. CLINK OF MILK BOTTLES
Continue same until exit of Milkman. Then
54. DEPARTURE OF HORSE AND WAGON
That'll be all to-night, boys.

50

OA.3
Yale One-Act Plays
Baker, George Pierce

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